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Favourite French fairy tales

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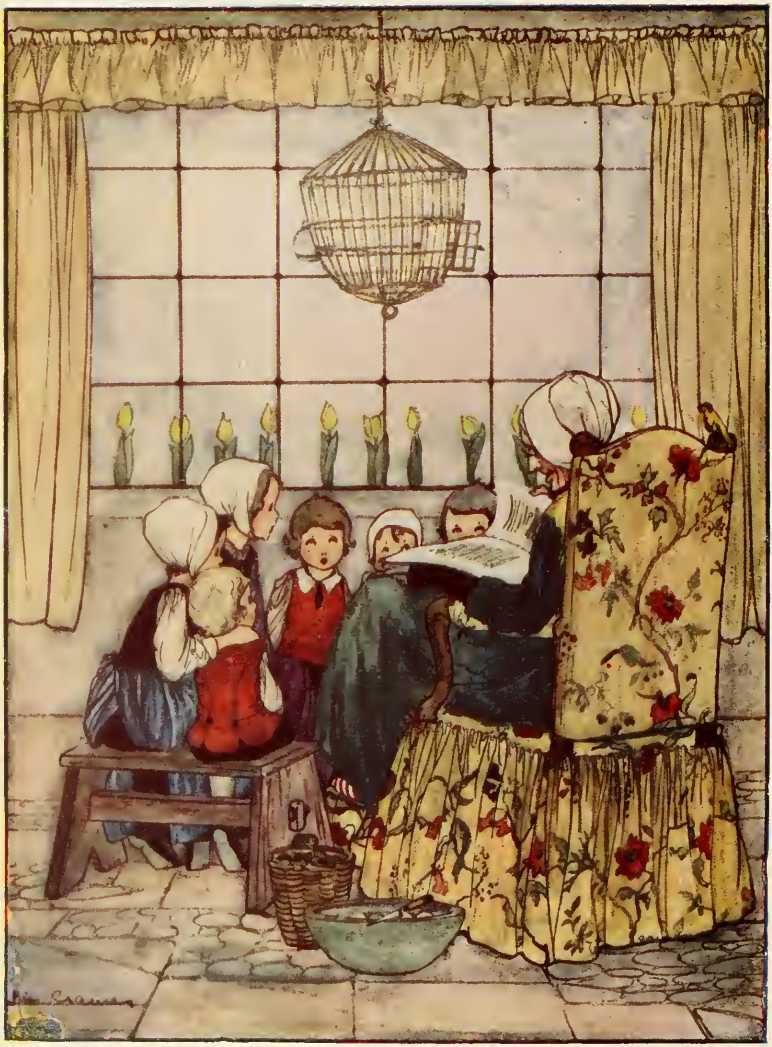

Fr. NEARLY BEDTIME!

FAVOURITE FRENCH FAIRY TALES

RETOLD FROM THE FRENCH OF PERRAULT MADAME D'AULNOY AND MADAME LEPRINCE DE BEAUMONT

BY

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CINDERELLA; OR, THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER

ONCE there was a gentleman who married, as his second wife, a most proud and selfish woman, who had two daughters as overbearing as herself.

He, too, had a daughter—a charming girl, whose disposition was like that of her own mother, who had been loved by all for her gentleness and kindly ways.

When the daughter was christened a fairy had appeared to act as godmother, and as the child grew up it was clear that she had received the best gift of all—a character that could not easily be spoiled.

No sooner were the marriage festivities over than the new wife showed her true character by

a violent outburst of temper against her stepdaughter. And all because the well-bred manners of the unfortunate girl made her own rude daughters seem hateful.

She determined to put her stepdaughter in her place, so she set her to do the most menial work of the house, to wash dishes, scour pots and pans and scrub the tables. It was she who had to polish the oak floors of the rooms where Madam and her two fine daughters slept.

A bare garret at the top of the house and a hard straw mattress were her portion, while their ladyships had soft beds, handsome furniture, and great mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot.

The poor girl bore it all very patiently. She dared not complain to her father; he would only have scolded her, being completely under his wife's thumb.

When she had finished her work, the poor girl was always so tired that she just sat down in a corner of the wide kitchen fireplace, with her feet near the ashes for warmth. Because of this, all made game of her; the elder

sister called her 'Cinder-scraper'; but the younger, who was not quite so rude, dubbed her 'Cinderella.'

None the less Cinderella, in her poor working clothes, was far more handsome than they in their splendid gowns.

Now it happened that the King's son was to give a ball, and all the nobility were invited. The two sisters were also invited, for the family cut quite a grand figure in the neighbourhood.

As you may suppose, this invitation pleased them mightily, but for Cinderella it meant more hard work, as it was she who ironed the linen her sisters wore, and who goffered their lace frills.

The stepsisters spoke of nothing else but how they would dress for the occasion.

"I," said the elder sister, "will wear my crimson velvet robe newly trimmed with my rare old lace."

"I," said the younger, "shall put on my usual skirt, but I shall wear an over-dress of gold brocade, and my diamond bodice-front, which is not unworthy of notice."

They engaged the services of the most fashionable dressmakers, and they bought their patches from the most noted maker.

They even talked over their attire with Cinderella, for they knew what good taste she had.

She not only gave them excellent advice, but she also offered to dress their hair herself. This offer they accepted gladly, and while she was brushing their tresses they unfeelingly asked her if she, too, would not like to go to the ball.

"Oh! please do not laugh at me!" she exclaimed. "You know that balls are not for the like of me!"

"You are quite right," said the elder sister. "People would roar with laughter if they saw a cinder-scraper entering the ball-room!"

Cinderella's beautiful eyes filled with tears. Any other girl would have revenged herself by dressing their hair badly, but Cinderella's kind heart was proof against the temptation, and she was so skilled that no hairdresser in the town could excel her.

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For two whole days the sisters were too much excited to take their food. They broke a dozen laces trying to draw in their waists to make them look slender; they just spent all their time before their mirrors.

At last the great moment arrived. The unfeeling sisters set off in high spirits, with never a thought for Cinderella, who followed them with her eyes as long as she could see them. When the coach was quite out of sight her brave young heart failed her, and she burst into tears.

At that moment her Godmother appeared before her.

"What is the matter, dear child?" she asked.

"I wish . . . I wish . . ." Cinderella's sobs choked her voice, and she could get no farther.

"You wish that you also could go to the ball—do you not?" said her Godmother kindly.

"I do . . . I do . . ." sobbed Cinderella.

"Well, you are a good girl and I shall see to that," said the Godmother.

She led Cinderella to the hall and bade her go to the garden and fetch a pumpkin.

Cinderella looked for the biggest she could find, and brought it to her Godmother, secretly wondering how a pumpkin could help her to get to the ball.

The Godmother scooped out the inside, leaving only the rind, then she touched this with her magic wand, and lo ! in its place stood a gorgeous gilded coach !

Then she went to the mouse-trap and found six mice all alive. Telling Cinderella to raise the trap-door only a little way to let the mice out one at a time, she touched each with her wand as it passed, and changed it into a beautiful horse. Thus there stood a splendid team of six well-matched dapple-grey horses, which any king might have envied—but there was no coachman !

Cinderella, who had looked on with wonder, now cried : " I will run and see if there is anything in the rat-trap. If there is a rat in it, we might perhaps make a coachman of him ! "

"You are right," said the Godmother; "go and see."

Cinderella brought the trap—it had three fine rats in it. Choosing the one that had the longest whiskers, with a touch of her wand the fairy changed him into a stately coachman, with the handsomest moustaches you ever saw.

Then she said: "Go to the garden and bring me the six lizards which you will find behind the watering-pot."

Cinderella brought them, and in a trice they were changed into six footmen with gold-laced liveries, who stepped up behind the coach, bearing themselves with as much dignity as if they had been fine lackeys all their lives.

Pointing to the coach with its splendid trappings, the fairy turned to Cinderella: "There is what is needed to take you to the ball—does it please you?"

"Oh, yes, dear Godmother, but how can I myself go in these ugly old clothes?"

Her Godmother touched her lightly with the wand, and lo! she stood dressed in cloth of gold and silver, all set with sparkling jewels,

while a pair of fine glass slippers gave an exquisite finish to her magnificence.

Thus attired Cinderella now seated herself in the coach, but before starting she was warned by her Godmother that she must not stay after midnight, that if she remained at the ball one moment later her coach would again become a pumpkin, her horses would be mice, her footmen lizards, and she would find herself once more in her old clothes.

Cinderella promised faithfully to leave before midnight, and set off with a joyful heart.

Her arrival at the palace made a great stir; word was at once brought to the King's son that a great princess whom no one knew had come, and he hastened to go himself to receive her.

He reached the courtyard in time to assist her to alight, and taking her hand he conducted her to the ballroom, where the brilliant company was assembled. As they entered there was a sudden hush—the musicians stopped, the dancers stood still, everyone's gaze was riveted on the dazzling beauty of the unknown princess.

Then there was a low murmur of voices from every side : " How lovely she is ! "

Even the aged King could not take his eyes off her, and he remarked softly to the Queen that it was many years since he had seen anyone so lovely and so lovable.

The ladies took every opportunity of studying the make of her garments, and the dressing of her hair, in order to have them copied if only they could find materials as rich and people clever enough to do it.

The King's son gave Cinderella the place of honour, and led her out as his partner in the dance. She danced so gracefully that everyone admired her more and more.

Delicious refreshments were served—fruits, ices, jellies, and wines—but the Prince quite forgot to eat, his mind being so full of the beautiful stranger, to whom he offered every dainty.

She had seated herself beside her sisters, and she showed them many polite attentions, giving them a share of the good things which the Prince had brought her.

This gave them a pleasant surprise, as they

did not in the least recognize Cinderella in the seeming princess who was so gracious to them. The beautiful stranger was still talking to them when she heard the clock strike a quarter to twelve; she rose at once, and making a low curtsey to the company, she retired as quickly as possible.

On returning home Cinderella found her Godmother awaiting her; after thanking her warmly, she told her how much she wished to go again the next evening, as the King's son had determined to give another ball and had pressed her to come.

She was still telling her Godmother of the happenings at the ball when her two sisters knocked at the door, so she ran to open it for them.

"How late you are!" she exclaimed, rubbing her eyes, yawning and stretching herself as if just newly awakened from sleep, though indeed sleep had not been in her thoughts since their departure.

"If you had been at the ball you would not have felt tired," said one of the sisters.

" There was a beautiful princess there—so beautiful that no one ever saw her equal. She was most polite and attentive to us, and gave us some of the choice dainties which the Prince had given to herself," said the other sister.

Cinderella could hardly hide her joy. She asked them the name of the princess, but they told her that no one knew it—that the King's son was so much in love with her that he would give all he had in the world to know who she was.

Cinderella smiled as she said, " She must have been beautiful indeed ! How fortunate you are ! Is it not possible for me also to see her ? Oh ! Miss Charlotte, could you not lend me the yellow frock which you wear every day ? "

" Lend my frock to a mean cinder-scraper like you ! " exclaimed Charlotte. " You must take me for a fool indeed ! "

Cinderella expected some such answer and was quite pleased, for it would have placed her in a very difficult position if her sister had been willing to lend her the frock.

Next evening the two sisters were again at

the ball, and so was Cinderella, even more richly dressed than upon the former occasion.

The King's son was constantly at her side, making pleasant little speeches and paying her compliments.

Far from getting weary, Cinderella enjoyed the ball so much that she completely forgot her Godmother's warning, and the first stroke of twelve rang out when she thought it was only a little after eleven o'clock. She rose in a moment, and fled as lightly as a fawn.

In her haste one of her glass slippers dropped from her foot upon the stair; she could not stop to pick it up, and before she reached the hall the last stroke of twelve had sounded.

The Prince had followed her quickly; not a trace of her could he find but the little glass slipper on the stair. You may be sure that he picked this up with great care.

Cinderella got home quite out of breath, without carriage, horse, or servant, and without a vestige left of all her magnificence, except one slipper like the one she had dropped.

The guards at the palace gate were ques-

tioned, but they had seen no princess going out, nor indeed anyone but a young girl who was so poorly dressed that she looked more like a peasant than a fine lady.

When the sisters returned from the ball, Cinderella asked if they had again enjoyed themselves, and if the stranger princess was there.

They said she was, but that, when midnight had struck, she had gone off so hurriedly that she had dropped one of her little glass slippers —the prettiest little thing in the world; that the King's son had picked it up and had done nothing but look at it ever since, thus showing how deeply in love he must be with the beautiful lady to whom it belonged.

They were quite right, for a few days later the King's son had it proclaimed by sound of trumpet that he would wed the lady whose foot the glass slipper would fit exactly.

A gentleman of the court was sent round with the slipper to see it tried on. He took it first to the princesses, next to the duchesses, then to each of the ladies of the court, but all

to no purpose. Then he brought it to the two sisters, who did their very best to pull it on, but in vain.

Cinderella, who had been looking on, now said, with a laugh : " Let me try—perhaps I shall be the lucky girl ! " At which the sisters burst into scornful laughter.

The gentleman who carried the slipper looked attentively at Cinderella, whose appearance pleased him very much. " It would only be fair," said he ; " my orders are to let every girl try it, till the owner is found."

Making Cinderella sit down, he presented the slipper, and her neat little foot went into it quite easily—indeed, the slipper fitted it like wax.

Great was the amazement of the two sisters, but it was greater still when Cinderella drew the other slipper from her pocket and put it on !

At that moment the Godmother appeared, and with a touch of her wand she changed Cinderella's poor clothes into even more magnificent garments than the former ones.

The two sisters now recognized her as the beautiful stranger they had seen at the ball; they threw themselves at her feet, begging her to forgive all their bad treatment of her.

Cinderella raised them, and kissed them affectionately, saying she forgave them with all her heart, and that she hoped henceforth they would love her.

She then gave her hand to the gentleman, who conducted her with great ceremony to the palace. When the Prince beheld her, in all the magnificence of the attire which her Godmother had bestowed upon her, he thought her more lovely than ever, and a few days later they were married.

Cinderella, who was as kind and good as she was beautiful, gave her two sisters apartments in the palace, and in due course got each of them married to a nobleman of the court.

LITTLE RED-RIDING-HOOD[1]

ONCE in a village by the side of a forest there lived the very prettiest little girl in the whole wide world.

Her mother loved her dearly, and her grandmother, who lived in a village on the other side of the wood, just adored her.

The good old woman got a little red cloak with a hood made for her darling, who looked so charming in it that everyone began to call her Little Red-Riding-Hood.

One day, when her mother was baking, hearing that Grandmother was not very well, and knowing that she liked girdle-cakes, she made one specially for her. She also put some

[1] I have departed from Perrault's ending; thus Little Red-Riding-Hood lives happy ever after!—*Translator.*

newly churned butter in a little pot for her, to tempt her appetite.

These she put in a little basket, covered them neatly with a white napkin, and called Little Red-Riding-Hood.

"I want you to go to your grandmother's, my dear; she is not feeling well. Take her this cake and little pot of fresh butter from me. Say I hope she will enjoy them, and I should like to know how she is."

It was a lovely day, and Little Red-Riding-Hood set off gaily, greatly pleased to be sent on such an errand all by herself.

Her road lay through the wood, which, to her, seemed always full of lovely and wonderful things.

The great trees threw patches of dappled shadows across the road, and as she went along she watched the butterflies flitting from flower to flower, the white-tailed rabbits scurrying off into the wood, and the gold-and-green-backed beetles shimmering by the edge of the grass.

A squirrel sprang from tree to tree, as if to

keep her company, peering at her slyly from behind the branches.

Birds sang, insects hummed, and the measured thud of the wood-cutters' axes beat time to the music with which the air was throbbing; everything seemed full of joyous life.

Near the middle of the wood, a great wolf stepped softly into the road, and bade the little girl "Good morning!"

He had seen her coming, and having had nothing to eat for three days would have liked to devour her at once, but he dared not for fear of the wood-cutters.

"Where are you going, my little girl?" he asked.

The poor child, who knew nothing of the danger of waiting to talk to a wolf, answered him at once:

"I am going to my grandmother's with a cake and a pot of butter from my mother."

"Does she live very far from here?"

"Oh! yes, farther than the mill you can see away over yonder; at the first house in the village."

" I think I shall go and see her, too," said the cunning wolf. " I see there are two paths to the village : suppose you take this one and I the other ; we could see which one of us would get there first." So saying, the wolf made off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Little Red-Riding-Hood was in no hurry, but gathered some nuts which were growing within her reach, and picked the prettiest flowers she saw, to make a posy for her grandmother, so the wolf easily got to the house long before her.

He knocked—*rat-tat*.

" Who is there ? " cried a voice from within.

In as soft a voice as he could, the wolf replied :

" Your Little Red-Riding-Hood, bringing you a girdle-cake and a pot of fresh butter from Mother."

The grandmother, feeling rather faint, had lain down to rest on her bed in the curtained recess.

" Pull the string," she cried, " and the latch will lift."

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The wolf pulled the string and the door flew open. In a moment he sprang on the poor old woman, and swallowed her at one gulp ; but her nightcap fell off on the floor.

Shutting the door, the wolf picked up the cap and tied it on, pulling it forward almost over his eyes, but he could not hide his ears, so he got into bed, drew the curtain forward to shade his face, pulled the coverlet up round his head, and lay still, waiting for Red-Riding-Hood.

Now, after the wolf left the little girl in the forest, one of the wood-cutters noticed a movement in the long grass, a little way off, and saw something dark passing swiftly between the bushes. He had heard the day before that a wolf had recently been seen prowling near the forest.

"Ha!" he said to himself, "the brute knows better than to come near men with axes!"

Some time later, standing up for a moment to look around, he spied in the distance a speck of red moving along the road not far from the village.

" It is the Little Red-Riding-Hood going to see her grandmother," thought he. " The old lady will be pleased ! "

Next moment he remembered the wolf ! Clutching his axe, he ran with long, rapid strides in the direction of the moving red figure, hoping to overtake her before any harm should befall her. He had never run so fast, but he was still a little way off when Red-Riding-Hood reached her grandmother's door.

She knocked—*rat-tat-tat.*

A strange, hoarse voice asked, " Who is there ? "

" What a bad cold poor Grannie has got," thought the little girl, but she answered, quite brightly :

" It is your Little Red-Riding-Hood. I am bringing you a cake which Mother has baked for you, and a little pot of sweet fresh butter to eat with it. I am to take her word how you are."

" Pull the string and the latch will lift," wheezed the wolf.

Little Red-Riding-Hood pulled the string, the door opened, and she went in.

The wolf drew the bed-clothes higher up round his head :

" Put the cake and the pot of butter in the bread-bin, set the basket on the lid, and come and lie down beside me."

Little Red-Riding-Hood did as she was told; then she took off her cloak and climbed on the bed, but suddenly sat back, amazed to see how strange her grandmother looked in her night-clothes. In a tone of wonder, she exclaimed :

" Oh ! Grannie, what great, big arms you have got ! "

" All the better to hug you with, my child."

" Oh ! Grannie, what great legs you have got ! "

" All the better to run with, my child."

" Oh ! Grannie, what great, big ears you have got ! "

" All the better for hearing with, my child."

" Oh ! Grannie, what great, big eyes you have got ! "

" All the better for seeing with, my child."

" But, Grannie, what terrible teeth you have got ! "

" Just the right size for eating you up ! "

With this, the wolf opened his great jaws—but hark !—heavy, rapid footsteps—a swift shadow crossing the window—a strong hand on the latch !

With one bound the wolf reached the door, only to be stretched dead on the threshold by the blow of an axe ! The woodman was there —but had he been in time to save the inmates of the cottage ?

A piteous wail, " My grannie ! my grannie ! where is my grannie ? " showed him that Red-Riding-Hood was safe, and, looking around for the old woman, his eye caught the nightcap trailing on the floor, the strings still round the wolf's neck. He understood.

Taking his big clasp-knife from his pocket he opened it, and slit the monster open from head to tail—there lay Grannie !

The woodman lifted her gently out—she was alive and unhurt !

The kettle she had put over the fire before lying down was boiling merrily, and in a very short time they were all three enjoying

a good cup of tea with girdle-cake and fresh butter.

Then, when the grandmother had kissed her darling to her heart's content, the woodman took Little Red-Riding-Hood up in his arms and carried her all the way home through the wood to her mother, who, you may be sure, could not make too much of her.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

A LONG time ago there lived a King and Queen, who for many years had no family, and, being very fond of children, they were almost heart-broken at their misfortune.

At last, to their great joy, the Queen had a little daughter.

The news of the birth of a Princess spread rapidly over the whole kingdom. Everyone kept holiday for a week. Bonfires blazed on the hilltops, and church bells rang merry peals to celebrate the event.

The King ordered that the christening should be the grandest ever known, and, in order that his daughter might have every charm and accomplishment, he invited all the fairies

that could be found in the country, seven in number, to come and be sponsors to the little Princess—for every fairy godmother makes some rare gift to her godchild.

After the baptism, the whole company returned from the church to the palace, where a great banquet had been prepared for them, and, as was usual on state occasions, the covers—that is, the plates—drinking goblets, spoons, knives and forks were all of pure gold.

The seven fairies were given places of honour at the feast, and for each of them the King had got specially made a magnificent case of pure gold set with rubies and diamonds, to hold her knife, fork and spoon, which she was to take as a keepsake to remind her constantly of her royal goddaughter.

As the fairies took their places at table, there entered a very old fairy, who had not been invited because no one remembered her. As she had not been outside her tower for over fifty years, people thought her either dead or enchanted.

On seeing her the King welcomed her most

kindly, and led her to the table, causing a gold cover to be brought for her. But he could not give her a jewelled gold case like the others, as only seven had been made, and the old fairy considered this a slight and vowed vengeance in her heart. As she took her seat, she muttered some angry words between her teeth. The young fairy who sat next her noted this, and greatly feared that the old woman meant some harm to the little Princess.

During the feast this kind-hearted young fairy never thought of the grand dishes she was tasting—her mind was busy planning how to save the royal infant from the wrath of the older and more powerful fairy. She knew that the youngest, being the least important, would be asked to present her gift first, and each would follow in turn, finishing with the eldest, yet she saw that, to do any good, she herself must be the last to speak. Before the feast was ended she had planned what to do.

Fortunately, the young fairy was not very tall, and as the guests rose from the table and crowded into the great hall, she slipped behind

the rich tapestry curtains which adorned the walls, no one missing her.

Then the ceremony of the Fairy-gifts began.

The first fairy endowed the Princess with dazzling beauty; the next with the tenderness and sweet temper of an angel; the third with such grace of movement and charm of manner that she would be loved by all who saw her; the fourth with the gift of dancing as lightly as a sunbeam.

The fifth gave her a voice of such beauty that no singing-bird could excel her; and the sixth gave her the art of playing every known instrument to perfection.

It was now the turn of the old fairy, who stepped forward with spiteful eagerness. Leaning on her ebony stick, her old head shaking more from temper than from age, she hissed out: "The child shall not grow up to womanhood—she will prick her finger with a spindle and die of the wound!"

As this announcement was made, the whole company drew back with shuddering horror; many burst into tears.

The King and Queen, who had been radiant with happiness while one good gift after another was showered on their darling, now clasped each other's hands and stood in mute agony, unable to relieve themselves by tears.

Just then, a clear young voice rang out from between the curtains which she was parting with her hands :

" Be comforted, my dear King and Queen ! I have yet to speak—the worst shall not happen ! True, I have not the power to undo all that my superior in age, rank, and power has decreed, but I can and I will lessen the misfortune.

" It must come to pass that the Princess shall prick her hand with the spindle of a distaff, but she shall not die of the wound ; she will fall into a deep sleep, which shall last for a hundred years. At the end of that time the son of a King shall come to awaken her, and to claim her for his bride."

During this speech you could have heard a pin fall, and at its end a great sigh of relief seemed to escape from everyone in the hall ; but on looking round not a fairy was to be

seen! It was against the custom of Fairyland for one fairy thus to interfere with another, and every fairy dreaded the consequence.

The King and Queen were filled with gratitude to the young fairy whose kindness of heart had given her courage to speak last and save their daughter, though she could not wait to receive their thanks.

Much comforted, the King, who was a man of action, immediately took steps to postpone the calamity as long as possible, that the Queen and himself might enjoy the company of their beautiful child for some years at least. He issued a proclamation forbidding anyone in his dominions to spin with a distaff and spindle, or even to have a spindle in her possession, on pain of death.

Some fifteen or sixteen years later, the King, Queen, and young Princess went with their retinue to one of their country seats, a very old castle, where they could enjoy some fine hunting and other sports.

The young Princess, who had read the history of the castle with great interest, amused

herself by examining the old rooms with their beautiful tapestries, and trying to find out the hiding-places and secret stairs behind the panelled walls which she had heard so many stories about; and one day she went up the high tower of the old keep. At the top of the winding stair was a small door, which she opened and passed through.

She found herself in a small garret, where, to her great surprise, sat an old woman spinning with her distaff—the old lady had never heard that the King had forbidden such spinning.

"Whatever is it that you are doing, my good woman?" asked the Princess.

"I'm spinning, my pretty girl," replied the old woman, who did not know, in the least, who it was who spoke.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried the Princess. "Let me try if I can do it, too!" So saying, the gay, impulsive girl caught hold of the spindle, and, not knowing how to use it, she pierced her hand with the sharp point, and fell fainting at the feet of the distressed and alarmed old woman, who called loudly for help.

People came running from all sides, and every means was tried to revive the Princess. Cold water was thrown on her face, the palms of her hands were slapped, her clothes were all unfastened, her temples were rubbed with toilet vinegar, but all was useless—nothing could restore her.

The King and Queen heard the running and the confused noise of voices as they came in from the garden, and went to find out what it meant. The sounds led them to the top of the tower, where the attendants stood aside to let them pass. There, on the floor of the garret, lay their beautiful daughter! They saw with dismay that the fairy-decree had begun to operate, and knew that nothing could be done to shorten the long sleep now begun.

The King had his lovely daughter carried down to her own room, where the Queen herself assisted the maids-of-honour to rearrange her golden hair, and to dress her in the richest clothes in her wardrobe; then the King went to superintend the officers and men-servants

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while they prepared the most magnificent room in the palace to receive her.

When all was ready the Princess was carried there and laid on a gorgeously gilded bed, hung with curtains of cloth of gold, and with a coverlet closely embroidered with gold and silver.

As she lay there in her perfect beauty, one might have taken her for an angel. Her cheeks had not lost their exquisite rose tint, and her lips remained as red as coral. Her eyes, indeed, were closed, but the gentle heaving of her bosom and the soft sound of her breathing showed that, though unconscious, she was not dead.

The King and Queen gazed long and tenderly on their beloved daughter. They knew, however, that they could not alter her fate, so they made all arrangements to ensure her being undisturbed during her long, long sleep, and they comforted themselves with the knowledge that she would yet wake up to happy life, though they might not live to see it.

The kind young fairy who had saved the Princess from the sleep of death happened to

be a thousand leagues away, in the Kingdom of Mattaquin, at the time ; but a little dwarf, whose boots enabled him to spring over seven leagues at a stride, sped off at once to tell her. In her fiery chariot drawn by winged dragons she drove through the air at incredible speed, and reached the castle just as the arrangements were completed.

The King went to receive her, and after thanking her for coming so promptly to comfort them, he told her all that had been already done by the Queen and himself.

The fairy approved of all, but being possessed of great foresight as well as sympathy, she imagined how lonely and shy the Princess was likely to feel on awaking a hundred years later, to find herself alone in the castle, with no one she knew to speak to her, or to do anything for her—only the young Prince, who would also be a stranger.

Quick as thought, she stepped lightly round, touching with her magic wand every living thing in the castle except the King and Queen, whose duties now called them elsewhere—

governesses, maids-of-honour, chambermaids, officers, house-stewards, butlers, cooks, scullery-maids, errand-boys, guards, gate-keepers, footmen—and at the touch each one fell into a deep sleep, only to awake with their mistress at the end of a hundred years !

The fairy did not stop there. Going into the stables, she touched horses and grooms, corn, straw, and bran ; in the courtyard she touched the great mastiffs ; in the kitchen she touched the spits with the pheasants and partridges already half cooked, and all stood still in an instant—even the fire came under the spell, so that at the moment of awaking everything might go on as if it had never stopped. Finally, she touched the little lap-dog, Fluff, which had curled itself up beside its mistress on the gorgeous covering of the bed. All this had taken only a few moments—fairies do not loiter over their work !

Bidding the King and Queen farewell, the fairy re-entered her chariot, the dragons spread their wings, and the equipage shot through the air like a meteor, leaving a trail of brilliant

light behind it. Then the King and Queen kissed their daughter many times without fear of awaking her, and sorrowfully returned to the palace.

Before leaving, the King had given orders that no one whatever should be allowed to go near the castle, lest prying, inquisitive people should disturb its calm repose; but the kind fairy, unknown to him, had seen to that.

A quarter of an hour after their Majesties had left, the great park was surrounded by a perfect forest of great trees of every description, standing up from a thicket of briers, thorns, and great trails of strong ivy, all entwined in a solid mass that neither man nor beast could penetrate. The trees were so high, and the thicket so dense, that no part of the castle was visible but the top of the tower, and that only from a considerable distance.

The King and Queen lived to a good old age, cheering each other by talking of all the pretty ways and clever sayings of their beloved child, who had left nothing but pleasant memories of her young life.

After their death, a King of quite a different family came to the throne. He was succeeded by his son, then by his grandson, who was reigning at the end of the hundred years. This King had a handsome, spirited young son, who was very fond of hunting, and one day this young Prince found himself in the neighbourhood of the castle, the tower of which he had seen from quite a long way off. He asked whose was the castle, and what it was called, but no one could tell him its name or that of its owner; each peasant whom he asked had some mysterious story to tell, but no two stories were the same. One said he had heard that it was haunted by ghosts of the dead; another that all the witches of the country held their weekly revels there; and others, that the castle belonged to an ogre, who carried off all the children he could find, to eat them there in safety, as no one but he could penetrate the thicket.

The astonished Prince did not know what to make of these tales, till an old peasant, who had lived in a cottage near the forest during his

whole life, came forward, and respectfully asked if he might speak to the Prince, who, liking the old man's appearance, told him to speak on.

" Fifty years ago," said the peasant, " I remember hearing my father tell that, when he was a boy, people used to say that the most beautiful young Princess that eyes ever beheld lay in that castle under a spell which would keep her in a deep sleep for a hundred years, at the end of which time the King's son would come to awake her, and to claim her for his wife, and I make bold to think, sire, that it must now be very near the time of her awaking."

The Prince believed the old man's story. Full of youthful enthusiasm, and fired with the desire to do knightly deeds, he resolved to overcome every obstacle, and not to allow another day to pass before he broke the spell under which the beautiful Princess was lying.

Calling his men to follow him, he rode straight toward the forest, and—wonder of wonders !—both the great trees and the underwood parted before him, disclosing a long avenue, with the walls of the castle visible

through the opening at the end. He looked round for his men, but not one of them was to be seen, for the trees and the thicket had closed behind him as he passed. If danger there was, he saw he must face it alone.

Where youth and beauty are concerned, however, danger only inspires a lover with greater courage, so he pushed on, undaunted, till he reached the outer court of the castle.

There, the sight that met his eyes almost froze the blood in his veins.

All around, in awful silence, and in every possible position, lay, sat, or stood men and animals, motionless as stone statues. Close beside him at the gate one of the great mastiffs seemed to strain at its chain ; while on the other side lay another, half out of its kennel, its head scarcely raised from its outstretched paws. One of the gate-keepers had a well-filled glass raised half-way to his lips, while another sat on the bench, his fingers still touching the empty glass he had set down.

For one dreadful moment the Prince halted, the next he strode on. As he passed the keepers

his keen eye noted that their faces were red and their noses pimpled, and that their countenances seemed full of rough good humour.

His quick wit told him that they were not dead, but that motion must have been arrested in an instant, by the same spell which bound the Princess. This thought dispelled the dread which, for a moment, had gripped his heart.

Crossing the marble pavement of the inner court, among many spell-bound attendants, he ascended the great stairs and went through the guard-room between rows of armed guards, whose loud snoring was the only sound he had heard, save his own footsteps, since he entered the gates of the castle. Passing through room after room, he knew by the richer dresses of the ladies and the more brilliant uniforms of the officers that he was nearing the object of his search. Quickening his steps, almost before he knew he found himself in a gorgeous apartment, where, on a magnificent bed, draped with gold embroideries, lay the most lovely being he had ever seen or imagined. She looked about sixteen years old, but the charm of her

radiant beauty gave her the appearance of belonging to heaven rather than to earth.

For a while he stood transfixed, gazing on the lovely vision with trembling admiration. Then slowly and softly he approached and knelt down beside the bed.

The appointed hour had come.

Under the influence of the loving gaze bent upon her the Princess awoke, and, turning toward the Prince, she held out her hand, saying in tones of affectionate tenderness :

" It is you, my Prince ! How long you have kept me waiting ! "

Charmed and surprised both with this speech and with the tone and manner in which it was spoken, the Prince kissed the extended hand and pressed it to his bosom, declaring that he loved her more than his life, and that he would never again leave her.

They were so absorbed in each other that the Prince did not even notice that the whole household waked up at the same moment as his Princess, and continued their work as if it had never been interrupted.

The Prince listened more than he talked, as everything was new and strange to him, but the Princess had been prepared by many beautiful dreams sent by the kind fairy, and talked as if she had known the Prince for years.

Four hours passed, and the attendants, not being in love, began to be very hungry. One of the maids-of-honour could wait no longer, so she interrupted their long conversation by telling the lovers that supper was served.

The Prince assisted the Princess to rise, and gave her his arm to go down to supper—she did not need to change her dress, being already magnificently robed, though, like all her retinue, in the fashion of a bygone age. She was none the less beautiful for that !

They supped in the hall of mirrors, served by the officers of the Princess in their splendid uniforms. During supper the musicians played beautiful old music which had not been heard for many years.

During supper, the Prince and Princess consulted the chaplain, who supped with them, as to how soon their wedding could take place.

As the Princess was too young to live alone, and had no relative to be her guardian, the good man proposed that he should marry them that very evening, in the private chapel of the castle, which he did in the presence of the whole household.

The youngest maid-of-honour acted as bridesmaid, and the lords and ladies of highest rank signed the register.

The chief officer of the household suggested that they should celebrate the occasion by a ball for the nobility, and another for the servants. This proposal pleased everyone. The grand ball was held in the ballroom of the castle, the Prince and Princess leading the dance, while the rest of the retainers danced to their hearts' content in the great servants'-hall.

There were abundant refreshments for all, and, having already slept so long (though they did not know it), they danced till morning without the least feeling of fatigue.

Before daybreak, riders on swift horses were dispatched by the Prince, with orders not to draw rein till they reached the palace, as he

knew that his father must already be full of anxiety on his account. They also carried a letter from him, with some lines added by the Princess, telling the King of their great happiness, and how joyfully they looked forward to being with him before the day was over, when they should have the pleasure of sharing their happiness with him.

The King was no longer young, and since the Queen's death, some years before, he had often felt very lonely, so the news gave him great pleasure.

He ordered such festivities as the short interval permitted to celebrate the home-coming of the newly married pair, and everyone hailed the advent of a Princess with delight.

As the time when they were expected drew near, the King stood in the doorway of the palace, at the top of the wide marble steps, while the attendants stood in a deep circle round the court. When the royal couple rode through the gateway, and the people caught sight of the Princess, " Long live the Queen of Beauty ! " echoed from every side.

The King had hastened down to welcome them, and amid the acclamations he assisted the Princess to dismount. He kissed her affectionately on both cheeks, saying : " A daughter needs no formal introduction to her father " ; then, placing one of her hands in that of his son, while he held the other, he led the way, and all three ascended the steps together. Having reached the doorway, they turned and stood to acknowledge the cheers which greeted them. Then the King raised his hand to speak, and everyone was silent.

Turning to the Prince and Princess, he said :

" My people ! I am old, and need rest. To-day I resign my throne. There, before you, stand your King and Queen ! He is as brave as he is handsome ; she is as good as she is beautiful ! "

Then a great shout rent the air :

" Long live our King and his beautiful Queen ! "

DIAMONDS AND TOADS

THERE was once upon a time a widow who had two daughters. The elder was so much like her mother, both in appearance and in nature, that people used to say, "If you see the one you see the other; they are exactly alike." And they were both so proud, and disagreeable, and ill-natured, that no one could bear them; in fact, there was no living with them at all.

The younger daughter, on the other hand, was the very image of her dead father, being courteous and sweet-tempered, and was also one of the most beautiful maidens ever born. Everyone sought her company and enjoyed talking with her. Indeed, whenever she went forth into the fields or into the forest it seemed

as if even the birds and the butterflies and the little flowers were glad to see her. They fluttered and nodded, and circled about her head; the butterflies rested on her hands, and the birds sang more sweetly than ever.

She was loved by everything in nature, with the exception of her mother and sister, who well-nigh hated her. They tormented her in every possible way, and made her life so miserable, that at times she would shrink away, weeping bitter tears, and say: "Oh! I wish I were dead!"

She had to do all the heavy work; it was always she who scoured the kitchen, cleaned the hearth, did the cooking, washed the dishes; in fact, she scrubbed and polished all day long. She was never allowed to come into the parlour, nor to taste any of the nice dainties which she had cooked; all she got was potatoes, with now and again a few beans, and the dry bread which the others would not eat. At night she slept on a mat in the garret, and in winter she was so ill-provided with blankets that she often lay shivering with cold.

Yet the little maid did not complain, and performed willingly all the work that fell to her lot. And whenever she felt specially tired and sad a little white dove would suddenly make its appearance, a little friend of hers from the forest near by.

"*Cooc-cooroo, cooc-cooroo,* my dear!" the dove would say, as it perched on the window-sill of the kitchen. "Are you feeling doleful again to-day? Don't lose heart; there will be an end to all this by and by, and in the end you are sure to be happy."

Then the little girl would think of her dead father, who just before dying had taken her hand in his and had said: "Dear child, remain always good and lovable and patient, and think often of me; I shall be at your side." So, as the little white dove always appeared just at the time when she found her lot hardest to bear, she could not but think that it was her father who sent the dove to comfort her.

Perhaps the heaviest work among the poor girl's many tasks was when twice a day she was obliged to go and fetch water in a huge earthen-

ware pitcher. The well was right in the forest, and nearly half an hour's walk from the house. At times she felt so tired that she did not know how she could ever carry the heavy pitcher home; many a time she had to sit down by the way and take breath before she could totter on again. And when at last, quite exhausted, she did reach her home, she was most often scolded by her mother or her sister for having taken so long.

One day, as she was at the well with her pitcher, a poor woman suddenly appeared, hobbling along a footpath, and begged to be allowed to drink from the pitcher. She said she had walked a long way and was very thirsty.

"Oh, yes, with all my heart, ma'am!" the girl answered, in her usual friendly manner; and after drawing and throwing away two or three pitcherfuls of water, in order to have it as fresh as possible, she offered it to the old dame, holding up the pitcher the while, that she might drink more easily.

When the old woman had drunk and refreshed herself, she said to the little maid:

" You have been so kind, and friendly, and mannerly to me that I cannot help presenting you with a precious gift."

For you must know that this old dame was a fairy, who had taken the form of a poor peasant woman just to see how far the civility and good manners of this pretty girl would go. " I will bestow on you this gift," continued the fairy, " that at every word you speak there shall come out of your mouth either a flower or a jewel."

The maid was much abashed, and said that she wanted no reward, and had done nothing to deserve one, since nothing was more natural than to offer a drink to an aged woman who was thirsty.

But the fairy answered, with a laugh : " Yes, it is just because you find it so natural that I am presenting you with a gift. Out of goodness comes goodness—it is always so."

The next moment the fairy had disappeared in the thick underwood of the forest.

The little maid was much astonished, but she took up her pitcher, filled it anew, and set out for home.

When she got there her mother was standing at the door, waiting for her with a scowling face.

"Well! I thought you would never come home! You seem to make a holiday of these trips to the well. Now I warn you that henceforth you must be back within half an hour, and not idle away all your precious time."

"Oh! Mother, I'm so sorry; but this time it wasn't entirely my fault that I was so long in coming back, for . . ."

While she spoke these words there fell from her mouth a succession of roses, pearls, and diamonds.

"What is this!" cried her mother in amazement. "I really do believe that these pearls and diamonds are falling from her mouth! How is this, my dear?"

It was the first time in her life that she had called her daughter 'my dear.'

Then the little maid told her what had occurred in the forest, by the well, and during her narrative numbers of diamonds continued to drop from her mouth.

"So!" said the mother. "My elder daughter Fanny must also go to the well."

"Fanny, Fanny!" she cried, "come here, quick, and just look what drops out of your sister's mouth at every word that she speaks! Wouldn't it be splendid if you also could obtain this gift? It is quite easily done; you have only to go for water to the well, and when an old woman appears and asks you for a drink out of the pitcher you have only to offer it to her."

"No, thanks! Do you think I would go to the well and carry that heavy pitcher with me? I would not think of it. I want no gifts, and I am not going."

Then her mother got very angry with her, and stamped her foot and threatened, and ordered her to go that very minute.

Fanny had to go, grumbling and muttering, but she would on no account carry the pitcher, and took instead a silver tankard that usually adorned the parlour.

While she was on her way to the well the little white dove, which was perched on a high

branch among the trees, saw her go by, and said: "*Cooc-cooroo, cooc-cooroo!* Does her mother really believe that precious gifts are to be won in this way? Nay, they must first be earned by good deeds. First be earned, and then . . . *cooc-cooroo, cooc-cooroo,* this one will come to no good."

Fanny was no sooner at the well than she saw coming out of the wood a lady most gloriously dressed, who came up to her and asked to be allowed to drink out of her tankard.

This was, you must know, the same fairy who had appeared to her sister, but who had now taken the appearance of a princess, to see how far this girl's rudeness would go.

"Do you really believe," she answered rudely, "that I have come here to give water to all and sundry? No, that was not my purpose in bringing my fine silver tankard. If you are thirsty, and want to drink, you may draw water for yourself."

"You do not appear to be very mannerly or obliging," answered the fairy, but without showing the least anger. "Well now, since you are

so disagreeable, I shall bestow on you this gift, that at every word you speak a toad or a snake shall drop from your mouth."

"Nay, she cannot do that," thought Fanny, and without troubling herself further about the fairy she took up her silver tankard and returned home with it.

"*Cooc-cooroo, cooc-cooroo,*" said the white dove, "she does not understand that goodness begets goodness, but that out of badness comes nought but evil."

The mother was standing at the door, impatiently awaiting her daughter's return. She was quite sure that her favourite must have received the same gift as her sister. To tell the truth, she had always been jealous of her younger daughter, and could not bear the thought that the latter should possess a gift that was not shared by the elder.

"Well, child!" she called out, as soon as Fanny appeared, coming out of the forest; "well, how did it go with you?"

"Why, how should it have gone?" answered Fanny — and at these words three

toads and three serpents dropped out of her mouth !

" Oh, heavens ! what is this ? " cried her mother, terribly alarmed and as pale as death. Then, in a passion of anger, she shouted : " This must be the work of that wretch, her sister ; but she shall pay for it ! " And picking up a heavy stick she rushed forth to give her a beating.

The poor child fled as fast as she could run, and hid in the thickest part of the forest, among the dark underwood, where no one could see her.

Trembling and quaking, she crouched there for many hours on end. If her mother and Fanny should find her, there was no more hope for her in this world. And yet, she was in no way to blame. How could her mother be so cruel and unjust ? And the tears streamed down her cheeks.

While she sat thus in hiding, she suddenly heard the snorting of a horse close at hand, and a moment later, peeping through a small opening in the bushes, she saw a young rider appear on a magnificent white steed. He bore a small

wounded hart in his arms, and appeared to be continually whispering fond words to the little animal.

The maid could not but look, her eyes wide open with astonishment. Forgetting everything else, she suddenly stood up, facing the Prince on his horse.

The young man was startled when he so unexpectedly saw the lovely maiden rise before him, with her eyes full of wonder and still wet with tears. Suddenly a great feeling of pity and sympathy came upon him.

"Who are you?" he asked, "and whence have you come? And why are you so sad?" Then he dismounted, gently laid the wounded hart among the cool grass, and taking her hand looked at her fondly with his deep-blue eyes.

To the maid it was as if suddenly the sun was shining on her with all its genial warmth, and she was thrilled with a new and unknown feeling of great happiness.

"I have been driven from home by my mother," she said, with a blush, "and have

taken refuge here." While she spoke these words, seven pearls and seven diamonds fell from her mouth.

The Prince saw this with inexpressible surprise, and asked her where the pearls and diamonds came from.

So the maid told him the whole story of her life, from the time when her father had died. She told him all that her father had said to her before departing this life, the sad existence which she had led with her mother and sister, and the heavy work which she had been forced to do; she told him about the white dove that always came to comfort her in her moments of greatest sadness, about her meeting with the fairy at the well, about the gift which had been bestowed on her, about Fanny, at whose every word a toad or a snake would now fall from her mouth, and about her last moments at home, when her mother had made ready to beat her with a stick.

The Prince listened open-eyed to her narrative, and loved her all the more, for this Prince, being himself good and noble-hearted, under-

stood at once why the fairy had bestowed such a gift on her.

So the Prince took her in his arms and set her on his white horse. Then he lifted the wounded hart, which he had found in the forest by the side of a brook, and which he was taking home in order to tend it, and he placed it in front of her on the saddle. Then he took the horse's bridle, and led it, bearing these two, to his palace, where one and the other would need no better physician than his kind heart.

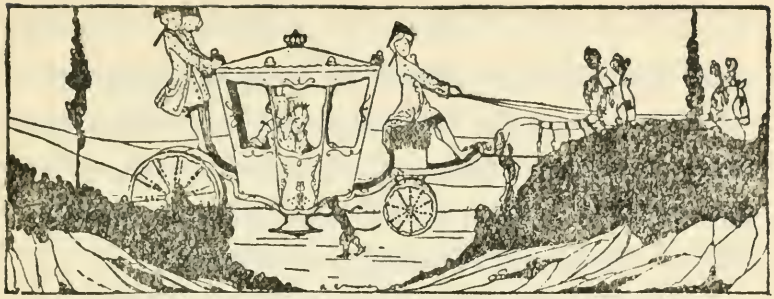
"*Cooc-cooroo, cooc-cooroo,*" said the little white dove, "in the end you are sure to be happy."

And after the Prince had introduced the maiden to his father the King as his bride-elect, preparations were made right speedily for the wedding.

Of the mother and her daughter Fanny nothing more was ever heard. They died unloved and unregretted.

The Prince and his little wife devoted their whole lives to relieving and comforting all who were in distress or affliction within their

kingdom, and whenever, toward evening, they took a walk in the forest to the spot where they had first met, they were attended by a lame deer, which must surely have been a great favourite with them both.



PUSS IN BOOTS

ONCE upon a time there was an aged miller who, when dying, left his property to his three sons, all he had being his mill, his donkey, and his cat.

An equal division of these was, of course, impossible, and to call in lawyers to *try* to do it would have eaten up the little there was, so the brothers wisely agreed that each should take a share as it stood, and make the best of it. The eldest son, therefore, got the mill, the second got the donkey, and only the cat was left for the youngest.

Very naturally he was grieved that his share was so small, and it puzzled him much to know what to do with it.

"My brothers," said he to himself, "can

earn quite a decent living by working together—the one can grind the corn, and the other can carry it away in sacks when ground, but, as for me, even if I were to eat my cat and wear its skin, I might die of hunger afterward."

This speech made Puss, who was near, feel rather creepy, but he acted as if he had not overheard it, for he loved his master, who had always been kind to him, leaving him little bits of fish on the fish-bones he gave him, and letting him lie on his knee by the fire in the winter evenings.

With his tail in the air, he came forward and rubbed himself against his master's legs, purring his loudest to gain his attention; then, as the young man stooped to stroke him, Puss looked up in his face and said cheerily:

"Do not lose heart, sir; just give me a bag with draw-strings and a pair of high boots to tramp through the briers with, and perhaps you will find that a cat may be worth more to you than *both* a mill and a donkey!"

His master did not build his hopes too high on hearing this speech, but he had often seen his

cat's agility and cleverness in tricking the rats and mice—hanging head downward, as if dead, lying quite motionless among the meal, and such-like—so he did not quite despair of being helped a little by Puss in his dire poverty.

When the cat had got the things he asked for, he proudly drew on his boots, slung the bag round his neck, put a handful of bran and some lettuce leaves in it, took the strings in his fore-paws, and went straight to one of the King's rabbit-warrens.

There he lay flat on the ground behind the bag, which he held open in front of him, and never moved till an unsuspecting young rabbit, smelling a good meal, crept into it. In a moment the strings were drawn tight—bunny was caught and killed. Another was enticed in the same way, and met the same fate.

Greatly pleased with his ' bag,' Puss set off for the palace, and asked to be allowed to speak to the King.

He was taken to his Majesty's apartment, where he made a low bow to the King, and said :

"Here, sir, is a pair of rabbits from the warrens of my lord, the Marquis of Carabas [this was the title he gave his master]. He has sent me to offer them to you, with his humble compliments."

"Tell your master from me," said the King, "that I thank him, and am pleased to accept his present."

On another occasion Puss went to hide in a field of wheat, his bag wide open as usual, and two unwary partridges ran into it. These he also went to present to the King, who was again graciously pleased to receive them, and told his purser to give Puss some money for his trouble.

The cat continued to act in this way for several months, every few days carrying game to the King, and you may be sure that he kept his master well supplied also.

Hearing from the servants at the palace one day that the King and his daughter, the most beautiful Princess in the world, were to take their drive along the road by the river, he said to his master :

"If you will take my advice, your fortune is

made. You have only to go and bathe in the river, at the spot I shall show you, and leave the rest to me."

The young man did as his cat advised, though indeed he couldn't see what good it would do him.

Just as he was bathing the royal carriage passed, and the cat began to shout wildly: "Help! help!—the lord Marquis of Carabas is drowning!"

Hearing the cry, the King put his head out of the carriage-window, recognized the cat that brought him game so often, and at once ordered his guards to go to the assistance of his lordship the Marquis of Carabas.

Puss, in the meantime, had hidden his master's clothes under a heap of stones, and while the guards were helping our marquis out of the river, his cat, in a state of great excitement, ran toward the royal carriage and told the King that while his master, the marquis, was bathing, thieves had stolen his clothes and run off with them, though he had shouted "Stop thief! stop thief!" at the top of his voice. Wherefore,

though his master's life was saved, he had no clothes to put on.

His Majesty was greatly concerned to hear of the plight of the poor marquis, and he ordered two of his equerries to ride back post-haste to the palace, to fetch from the royal wardrobe the finest clothes they could find for his lordship.

A grand suit was soon brought and handed to the cat, who hastened with it to his master, and having helped him to dress in it, Puss conducted him to the royal carriage, to pay his grateful respects to the King and to thank his Majesty for such timely help.

The miller's son, being healthy and well-built, was a good-looking young fellow at all times, but now, in his magnificent court dress, he looked so stately that few, if any, of the young nobles could compare with him.

The King, who had never seen the marquis till that day, was much struck with his handsome appearance.

He embraced him again and again, then presented him to his daughter, who had been

watching the fine-looking young stranger with secret admiration.

His Majesty insisted that our marquis should join the royal party in their drive, and gave him the seat next to himself in the coach.

During the drive, while her father was talking to the marquis, the Princess could not help noticing the frequent glances of respectful admiration which his lordship of Carabas bestowed upon her, and before the drive was ended she had fallen deeply in love with him.

The cat, overjoyed to see his plans succeeding so well, now went on in front of the party, taking short cuts wherever there was a bend in the road to keep ahead of the carriage.

Coming to some peasants who were mowing in a meadow by the roadside, he called to them :

" Listen, my good folk : the King is coming this way, and may ask you whose hay you are mowing. If he does, you must say it all belongs to his lordship the Marquis of Carabas. If you fail to say this, I shall have you all chopped into mince-meat."

As expected, the King stopped the carriage,

when it reached the meadow, that he might ask the peasants who was the owner of the hay they were cutting.

" It all belongs to his lordship the Marquis of Carabas," they shouted with one voice, remembering the cat's dreadful threat.

" That is a fine bit of meadow-land," said the King, turning to the marquis. " Yes, sire," he replied, " it yields a very heavy crop every year."

Master Puss, who always kept well ahead, next came to a band of reapers. " My good men," shouted he, " if you do not tell the King, who will pass shortly, that all the corn you are reaping belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, I shall have you all chopped into mince-meat."

The King, who passed shortly after, inquired to whom those splendid fields of wheat belonged.

" They belong to the Marquis of Carabas," they all shouted together, and the King again congratulated the marquis.

The cat, who kept well on in front, gave the same directions to everyone whom he met, and

as one and all were too terrified to disobey, the King was astonished at the great possessions of his new friend, the Marquis of Carabas.

Finally the cat came to a grand castle, and, on inquiry, he found that it and all the country through which they had driven belonged to an ogre, whose wealth was uncountable.

From the servants Puss found out all he could about this Ogre, his riches, his power, his ferocity, and the many wonderful things he could do.

Then, saying he did not like to pass the castle without paying his respects to such a great person, he asked to see him.

The Ogre received the cat as politely as an ogre knows how to do, and asked him to rest a little while, and, if he had time, to stay to lunch with some friends whom he was expecting in a quarter of an hour.

The cat asked nothing better than the chance thus offered for carrying out his own plans.

" People tell me very wonderful things about your Highness," said the cat. " They even say that you can change your form when you like,

and that you can turn yourself into a lion or an elephant at will. Is it so, really?"

"Certainly!" said the Ogre sharply. "And to satisfy you on that point I shall change myself into a lion." Which he did there and then.

No sooner did he see the lion before him than Puss jumped out of the window in terror, and, fearing pursuit, climbed up the gutter to the roof, not without both danger and difficulty, the boots being sadly in his way. These, though good for tramping over briers, were useless for clinging to slanting tiles.

When the Ogre had resumed his own form, Puss clambered down and re-entered by the window, frankly confessing that he had been dreadfully afraid.

"That *was* a feat!" said the cat again; "but I have been told you can do a more wonderful one still. Is it true that you, who are so very big, can turn yourself as easily into quite a small animal like a rat or even a mouse? To my mind that would be quite impossible!"

PUSS PAYS RESPECTS TO THE OGRE

" *Impossible !* " cried the Ogre scornfully. " You shall see ! " A tiny mouse began to play on the floor ! In a twinkling it was caught and eaten by the cat.

The royal party, by this time, had reached the castle, and the King made up his mind to call on the owner.

Puss heard the sound of the carriage on the drawbridge, and quickly went down to meet it. As it came through the gates, he made a sweeping bow to the King and said :

" Let me welcome your Majesty to the castle of his lordship the Marquis of Carabas."

" What ! my lord Marquis," said the King, " this castle also is yours ? Why, nothing could possibly be finer than this spacious courtyard and the noble buildings which surround it ! Let us see the interior, if you please."

The marquis gave his hand to the Princess to help her to alight, and they followed the King into the castle.

They entered the stately dining-hall, where they found the feast prepared for the Ogre's friends, who arrived at that moment, but who

dared not go in when they heard that the King was there.

The servants, to whom the cat had given the hint, quickly helped the marquis and his royal guests to all the good things on the table — savoury dishes, rich cakes, delicious ices, and the finest old wines from the Ogre's cellars.

The King and his daughter were not only charmed with the amiability and good looks of the marquis, but were also delighted to know of his wealth and great estates.

After having refreshed himself with a few glasses of wine, the King turned to his host and said: "My dear Marquis of Carabas, if you do not become my son-in-law, you will have yourself to blame!"

Our marquis rose and bowed low to the King, then turned to the Princess and, laying his hand on his heart, dropped on one knee before her.

With a pretty blush on her cheeks, the Princess got up from her seat, and holding out her hand, made him rise, and led him to her

father, the King, who gave orders that their marriage should take place immediately.

Master Puss had been peeping and listening by the slightly open door of the room, hardly able to keep from mewing aloud with delight when he saw the turn things were taking; but now, when his hopes were crowned, he could hold himself no longer, and turned catherine-wheels from the top of the grand stair to the bottom in his joy.

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and festivity, and the Marquis of Carabas and his bride lived happily to a good old age in the magnificent castle which had belonged to the Ogre.

The servants were delighted to have such a kind master and gentle mistress, for they had only served the Ogre from fear of what he might do to them.

The cat was made a great noble, and had part of the castle set apart for his own use.

Needless to say he never again had to catch rats or mice, except for the pleasure of having a day's hunting!

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

A VERY wealthy merchant was left, at his wife's death, with a family of three sons and three daughters.

As he was a highly intelligent man, he determined to give his children the best education that money could procure for them, and he spared no expense to engage the very best masters to teach them.

The three daughters were exceedingly handsome both in face and person, but the youngest was especially admired for the sweetness of her countenance. When she was only a very little girl everyone called her the beauty of the family, and as she grew up the name was still used, and all friends addressed her as "My Beauty," to the disgust of her elder sisters, who were jealous of her.

Beauty was not only prettier than her sisters but she had a very much finer character, being good-tempered, gentle-mannered, obliging, and considerate.

The sisters, on the contrary, were haughty and purse-proud. They liked to imagine themselves great ladies, and they despised the daughters of the other merchants, refusing to visit them or to receive their visits. They spent all their time driving in the park or going to balls and theatres, and they amused themselves by making game of their younger sister because she spent her leisure painting, studying her music, or reading the works of the best authors.

As everyone knew of their great wealth, these young ladies had many suitors from among the families of the other rich merchants, but when these gentlemen asked them in marriage, the two sisters replied contemptuously that no one less than a duke, or at the very least an earl, need take the trouble to propose to them. When any gentleman proposed marriage to Beauty, she thanked him politely for the honour he did her, but told him she was too young to marry, and

wished to stay at home to cheer her father for some years yet.

Quite suddenly the merchant lost the whole of his great fortune, and all he had left was a few acres of land with a small cottage on it, quite far away in the country.

Almost broken-hearted, he called his children together and told them of the calamity, and that they must prepare to leave town and accompany him to the cottage, where, by industry and hard work, they would be able to live plainly, like the peasants, and pay their way honestly.

The two elder daughters laughed scornfully at the idea of living in such a place, and replied that they had lovers enough desirous of marrying them for their beauty, even if they had not a penny. They were woefully disappointed, however, for these very lovers refused to look at them now that they were poor. As they had always been so disdainful in their treatment of their neighbours, no one was sorry for them.

"They do not deserve to be pitied. It is a good thing to know their pride is humbled," was all one heard, but with regard to the youngest

sister it was quite different, and on all sides one heard :

" Oh ! how sorry we are for poor Beauty—she was always so gentle and kind, and she was so polite when she spoke to us ! "

There were even several gentlemen who came, now when she had not a farthing, to ask if she would marry them; but while she thanked them from her heart, she told them that she could not leave her father in his misfortune, but would go with him to the country, where she would grudge no trouble to try to make him comfortable, and to help him all she could in his work.

Poor Beauty had certainly been grieved by the loss of their wealth—it could not have been otherwise; but when she felt inclined to cry over it, she said to herself :

" Why should I cry ? An ocean of tears would not mend matters. I must try and be happy without riches, like the people I see round about me."

When they were settled in their country cottage, the merchant and his three sons set to work to dig and cultivate their land. Beauty rose at four

o'clock every morning and busied herself cleaning the house and preparing and cooking food for the family.

At first she found it all very difficult, but it gradually became easier, and at the end of a few months she did not think it a trouble at all. Also, she was very much stronger—air and exercise had given her perfect health, so that she became more beautiful than ever. When she had finished her household tasks she read, played on the harpsichord, or sang to herself while spinning.

Her two sisters, on the contrary, were bored to death with their surroundings. They did not get out of bed till ten o'clock, and spent their time wandering aimlessly about, talking to each other about their former grandeur, and regretting their fine clothes and gay companions. They twitted their sister with being mean and poor-spirited because she was contented in her poverty. Their father did not think as they did. He knew that Beauty was better fitted than they were to shine in a high position. He greatly admired the character of his youngest daughter, and especially her

gentle patience with her sisters, who not only left all the housework for her to do, but constantly insulted her while she was doing it.

When the family had lived about a year at the cottage, the merchant got a letter informing him that a ship in which he had valuable cargo had just arrived safely in port. The two elder girls nearly lost their heads with joy at the news, thinking that now they would be able to leave the cottage where time had hung so heavy on their hands, and when their father was ready to start upon the journey which he must make to town, they gave him a list of the dresses, mantles, and hats that he was to bring them. Beauty asked for nothing, thinking to herself that the price of the cargo would hardly pay for all the things her sisters had asked.

"Do you not want me to bring you anything?" said her father.

"Oh! thank you!" said Beauty. "I should be so glad to have a rose, if you can get one, for there are none in our little garden."

It was not really that Beauty wanted a rose so much, but she did not want to look superior to

her sisters for fear of hurting their feelings, and she knew a rose would not cost much.

The good father set off with hope in his heart, but when he arrived in town someone brought a lawsuit against him, and though he won his case, it took all the money he had received to pay the lawyers, so that after all his trouble he had to return home as poor as when he went away, and very much sadder. But he comforted himself with the thought that he would soon be among his own family again, and urged his horse on as quickly as it could go.

When he was only thirty miles from home it began to snow heavily, so that he could only see a few yards before him. The road lay through a large forest, with many paths branching in different directions. He took a wrong turning and soon found himself completely lost. The wind had risen to a furious gale, and he was twice blown off his horse. Then darkness came down, and the thought of spending the night in the forest, with the wolves already howling in the distance, filled him with dismay. Also he was stiff with cold and very hungry. Leading his tired horse he almost

groped his way, but he felt safer on foot, as the swaying branches were too high to hurt him. All of a sudden he saw a distant light and going in its direction soon found himself in a long avenue, at the end of which were many lights. Thanking God for such a deliverance, he mounted his horse. The intelligent animal also saw the lights and needed no urging to gallop toward them. They came from the windows of a great castle, but though it was illuminated as if for a feast, there was no sign or sound of life anywhere around it.

From the court they could see the open door of a great stable, toward which the horse turned of its own accord, and, finding both corn and hay there, the tired, hungry animal attacked them without hesitation and made a good meal.

The merchant tied him up for the night and turned toward the house, but no one was to be seen. He entered the open door and found himself in a great dining-hall, with a good fire blazing on the hearth, and a fine dinner already on the table, but with only one cover laid. As he was wet to the skin, he stood up before the fire, saying to himself:

"Both master and servants will pardon me, under the circumstances, and no doubt they will soon be here."

He waited long, but no one came, and when the clock struck eleven o'clock he could resist no longer, for he was faint with hunger, so he took some chicken from a dish and ate it greedily, but trembling with fear of the consequences. As no one came, he filled a glass of wine for himself and drank it off, then another, and another. His courage returned, he went from the dining-hall, through one splendid apartment after another, all magnificently furnished, and soon found himself in a beautiful bedroom, evidently prepared for a guest, and as it was past midnight, and he was greatly fatigued, he made up his mind to lock the door of the room and go to bed.

He did not wake till ten o'clock next morning, and the first thing his eye fell on was a fine new suit of clothes laid where his wet, muddy garments had been the night before.

"Surely," said he to himself, "this palace must belong to some good fairy, who has taken pity on me in my misery."

He rose and looked out of the window. The snow was all gone, and under a bright sun lawns of velvety grass, avenues of shady trees, and arbours of roses, with fountains and flowers, enchanted the eye.

He dressed and went down to the great hall where he had supped the previous night, and there, on a small table, was a cup of delicious chocolate and some crisp toast.

"Thank you, my lady fairy," said he, "for having had the goodness to think of my breakfast."

When he had taken his chocolate, the good man went out to the stable for his horse, and, as he passed under a bower of roses, Beauty's request came to his mind, so he broke off a branch which had several roses on it. As he did so, a sudden fearful sound arose, and, looking round, he saw coming toward him a beast so horrible in appearance that he almost fainted.

"Monster of ingratitude!" said the Beast in a terrible voice. "I saved your life by receiving you into my castle, and, for my thanks, you rob me of my roses, which I love above all else in the world! Your life is the price you must pay for

such a deed. I give you one quarter of an hour to prepare for your death!"

The merchant, clasping his hands, threw himself on his knees before the monster and cried:

"Pardon me, my lord, I did not dream of offending you. I was only gathering a rose for one of my daughters who had asked me to take her one."

"I am not called 'my lord,' but 'the Beast,'" replied the odious creature. "I hate compliments, and only wish people to say what they really think, so you need not try to make me change my mind by your flatteries.

"You say, however, that you have daughters, so if one of them will come, of her own free will, to die in your stead, I am willing to pardon you—no arguing!—I have told you my will—off with you! And if none of your daughters will die for you, give me your oath that you will return yourself three months from this day."

The good man had no intention of letting any one of his daughters sacrifice herself for him, but he saw the opportunity of seeing his family once more, and of bidding them farewell, so he

promised, and the Beast told him he was free to go at any hour that suited him, adding :

" I do not wish you, however, to leave my house empty-handed. Go back to the room you slept in. There you will see a large empty chest. You may fill it with whatever you see around you, and I shall see that it is taken to your cottage." Then the Beast disappeared.

The merchant consoled himself a little by thinking that, if he had to die, he would now be able to provide his children with something to help them to live, so he returned to the bedroom. Looking around him, he discovered quite a heap of gold coins lying on the floor. With these he quickly filled the chest and locked it; then, taking his horse from the stable, he remounted, and left the palace with a very heavy heart.

The horse, of its own accord, took the shortest way to the cottage, where they arrived in a few hours.

On his arrival the family crowded round him, kissing him and welcoming him home, but instead of returning their caresses he burst into tears.

He held the rose branch in his hand, and when

he could speak he turned to his daughter, and gave it to her, saying :

" My Beauty, take the roses—they are going to cost your unfortunate father very dear ! "

Then he told his family the dire strait in which he found himself.

On hearing his story, the two elder daughters uttered piercing shrieks, and heaped insults and bad names on poor Beauty, who did not shed a tear.

" Only think what the pride of that small creature has brought about ! " said they. " Why could she not ask for useful garments, like us ? But no ! the young lady wished to distinguish herself. Look, she does not even cry for causing the death of her father ! "

" That would be a very useless thing to do," said Beauty. " Why should I weep for my father's death ? He shall not die ! Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters in his place, I shall give myself up to it, and shall be proud if by the sacrifice of my life I can save that of my dear father."

" No ! my dear sister," cried the three brothers,

with one voice. "We shall go and find this monster, and we shall kill him or perish ourselves."

"Do not indulge in such hopes," said the merchant. "The power of this Beast is so great that I have no hope of anyone being able to kill him. I am charmed with the kind heart of my Beauty, but I cannot let her risk her life. I am old, and, at best, could only live a few years longer. I have nothing to regret but leaving you alone, my dear children."

"I assure you, dearest Father," said Beauty, "that you shall not go to the Beast's palace without me. You could not possibly hinder me from following you. Although I am young, life has no great attractions for me, and I prefer being devoured by the monster to dying of grief for the loss of my father."

It was useless to try to dissuade her. Beauty was quite determined to go with her father when the time should come for him to return to the palace, and the jealous sisters could hardly hide their pleasure at her decision.

The merchant was so grieved at the thought of perhaps losing his favourite daughter that

he quite forgot to speak of the chest of gold coins which the Beast had promised to send, but on going to bed he found it there at his bedside.

He made up his mind not to tell his two elder daughters about it, as he felt sure they would want to go back to their extravagant life in town, and he had determined to spend what of his life might still be before him in the country. He, however, confided the secret to Beauty, who at once remembered to tell him that during his absence two gentlemen who had made their acquaintance had fallen in love with her sisters, and, in the goodness of her heart, she advised her father to use a great part of the money in getting them married and comfortably provided for. The sweet-tempered girl cherished no resentment against them for their daily unkindness to her. She wanted to see them happy.

When the sisters saw Beauty ready to start with her father, at the date fixed, they rubbed their eyelids with an onion to make them look as if they were weeping; but the brothers, as well as their father, wept in earnest, not knowing what

might happen. Beauty alone did not cry, for she did not wish to add to their grief.

They set off on horseback, Beauty riding on a pillion behind her father. The horse took the road to the palace without being guided, and they arrived in the evening, finding the whole place brilliantly lighted as before. They alighted at the entrance. The horse went to the stable, while the father and daughter entered the dining-hall, where they found a magnificently spread table, with covers for two. The merchant was too sad to care to eat, but Beauty made a great effort not to seem afraid, and sitting down, began to help him to the different dishes which he preferred. While they were eating, Beauty remarked to herself:

"The Beast must wish to fatten me before eating me, as he has provided such a feast."

Just when they had finished their supper they heard a strange noise, and the merchant, feeling sure it was the Beast, bade his daughter adieu, weeping bitterly.

Beauty could not help shuddering when she saw the horrible face of the frightful creature, but she made a brave effort to overcome her fear, and

when the monster asked her if it was really of her own free will that she had come, although she was trembling from head to foot she answered, "Yes."

"You are a good girl, and I am much obliged to you," said the Beast; then he turned to the father and said:

"Good man, leave this palace to-morrow morning, and do not take it into your head to return.

"Good night, my Beauty."

"Good night, Beast," the maiden replied, and the Beast withdrew.

"Oh, my child," said the merchant, embracing his daughter, "I am half dead already with horror. Hear me! Let me stay."

"No, dear Father," said she firmly; "you will go home to-morrow, and you will leave me to the care of kind Providence, who will perhaps take pity on me."

They parted to go to their bedrooms; neither of them expected to sleep that night, but their heads were no sooner on their pillows than they fell into a deep slumber.

During her sleep, Beauty dreamt she saw a lady, who said to her :

" Beauty, I am charmed with your tenderness of heart. Your kind action in giving your life to save your father's will not go unrewarded."

In the morning Beauty told the dream to her father, and it comforted him a little, but it did not keep him from crying aloud in his distress when the moment came for parting with his beloved daughter.

When he was out of sight, Beauty could not help throwing herself on a couch and sobbing as if her heart would break. This relieved her feelings, and, being of a brave nature, she sat up, commended herself to the care of God, and though she quite expected to be eaten by the Beast that evening, she resolved not to waste the few last hours of her life by meeting her trouble half-way.

She therefore took a walk through the lovely grounds, and then began to explore the interior of the castle. She could not help admiring the magnificent decorations and priceless tapestries, as well as the costly furniture.

She came to a door on which was written:

BEAUTY'S BOUDOIR

Extremely surprised, she quickly opened the door, and was dazzled by the brilliance of her surroundings—every comfort and luxury she could desire was there.

One of the first things that caught her eye was an exquisite bookcase, filled with handsome editions of her favourite books, and near it was a harpsichord with an abundance of music.

"The Beast does not want me to weary," said she in a low voice; then she thought to herself, "If I had only one day to live, he would surely not have provided so much for my entertainment." This thought gave her courage. She opened the bookcase, and took out a volume with a very long title in gold letters; it was this:

Desire. Command.
You are Lady and Mistress here.

"Alas!" thought she, with a sigh, "I desire nothing but to see my poor father, and to know what he is doing just now."

She laid down the book without speaking a

word. Judge then of her surprise when, in a great mirror on the opposite wall, she saw the cottage where her father was just arriving, broken down with grief. Her sisters came out to meet him, pretending to be sorry, but, in spite of their false grimaces, joy was visible in their eyes to see him returning without her. Then it all disappeared, and, standing there, she could not help thinking how considerate and kind the Beast seemed to have been in trying to make her happy, and in her heart she felt she need not be so much afraid of him.

At noon an excellent dinner was on the table, and while she was eating she listened to a fine band playing lovely music, but no one was visible.

In the evening, as she sat down to supper, she heard the peculiar noise made by the Beast, and she could not help trembling violently when he appeared.

"Beauty," said the monster, "are you willing to let me look at you while you sup?"

"You are master here," said Beauty, in a tremulous voice.

"No!" replied the Beast, "you alone are

mistress here. You have only to bid me go away if my presence annoys you and I shall go at once. Tell me frankly—do you not think me extremely ugly?"

"I do indeed," said Beauty, "for I cannot tell an untruth, but I think you are very kind."

"You are right," said the monster, "but besides being ugly, I am very stupid. I know quite well that I am only a fool."

"No one is really stupid who thinks he is not clever. No fool ever considers himself one."

"Enjoy your supper, then, Beauty," said the monster, "and try not to feel weary in your own house, for all you see is yours, and it would grieve me much to see you unhappy."

"You are very kind," said Beauty, "and your goodness of heart gives me great pleasure. Indeed, when I think how good you are, I do not seem to see you so ugly."

"Oh! for that part," said the Beast, "my heart is tender enough, but it does not hinder me from being a monster."

"There are many men far worse monsters than you are," said Beauty, "and I prefer you

with the face you have to many men I have met, who, behind a handsome face, hide a false, bad heart."

"If I had wit enough I should pay you a great compliment to thank you for the pleasure your words give me," said the Beast, "but, being so stupid, all I can say is that I am greatly obliged to you."

Beauty took a hearty supper, and quite forgot her fear of the Beast, but she was again in an agony of terror when he suddenly said to her:

"Beauty, will you be my wife?"

It was some time before she could find words to reply, but at last she answered simply:

"No, Beast."

At this the poor monster heaved a dreadful sigh, which seemed more like a shriek, and the whole palace shook with the sound. Beauty thought her last hour had come. The Beast, however, only said gently: "Good night, then, Beauty," and went slowly to the door, turning his head from time to time to look wistfully at her as he went.

Left alone, Beauty felt a great wave of pity rising within her.

"What a pity it is that he is so ugly!" said she. "He is so very good and kind!"

Three months passed thus in the palace, without any special event. Every evening Beauty received a visit from the Beast, who did his best to entertain her during supper with his simple talk, which never lacked good sense, but which was far from being what is called, in society, brilliant conversation. Every day Beauty noticed some new token of the goodness which lay below the repulsive outward appearance of the monster. She was becoming accustomed to his ugliness, and instead of dreading his visits she often found herself looking at her watch as nine o'clock drew near, for that was the hour when he made his appearance. There was only one thing which really distressed her. It was that the monster, before leaving her, never failed to ask her if she would become his wife, and never seemed less pained at her refusal.

One evening, Beauty said to him:

"Beast, you grieve me greatly. I only wish

I could bring myself to marry you, but I am too sincere to pretend to you that I can ever do so. I shall always be your friend—will you not try to be contented with that? "

"I suppose I must," said the Beast. "I can judge justly, and I know how horribly ugly I am, only I love you greatly. I ought to be very thankful that you are willing to remain here to keep me company. Promise me, I entreat you, that you will never leave me."

Beauty blushed deeply at these words. That afternoon she had seen in her mirror that her father was very ill from his grief at losing her, and she wished greatly to visit him, and reassure him.

"I could readily promise," said she, "never to leave you altogether, but I wish so much to see my father again that I shall die of grief if I may not do so."

"I would rather die myself than grieve you," said the monster. "I shall send you home to your father, you will stay there, and your poor Beast will die of grief."

"Oh, no!" said Beauty, weeping. "I love you too much to wish to cause your death. I

promise you to return in eight days. You have enabled me to see that my sisters are both married, and that my brothers have joined the army. My father is quite alone. Let me stay with him for a week, I beg of you."

"You shall be there to-morrow morning," said the Beast, "but do remember your promise. When you are ready to return, you have only to lay your ring on the table when you go to bed. Good-bye, Beauty."

The Beast sighed, in his usual fearful way, when he said these words, and Beauty went to bed, much grieved at having hurt him. She awoke next morning in her father's house. She rang a bell which was on the table by the side of her bed, and it was answered by the servant-maid, who gave a great cry of astonishment when she saw her. The father went quickly upstairs to know what had happened, and was beside himself with joy when he saw his dear daughter. He clasped her in his arms and they embraced each other long and tenderly.

When she got up to dress, Beauty remembered that she had no clothes to put on, but the maid

told her that she had just found a chest in the next room, and on opening it she saw it was filled with magnificent robes of costly materials, trimmed with gold lace and embroidered with jewels, and Beauty felt most grateful to the kind Beast for his attentions. She chose the plainest of these beautiful dresses; then she asked the maid to lock the chest, as she wished to give the others to her sisters, but she had hardly said the words when the chest disappeared. Her father said it looked as if the Beast only intended the dresses for herself, and at these words the chest was again in its place.

While Beauty was dressing, word of her arrival was sent to her sisters, who appeared soon after with their husbands. Both of them were miserably unhappy. One had married a man who was exceedingly handsome, but who was so vain that he thought of nothing but his own good looks, and took no notice whatever of his wife. The other had married a man who was extraordinarily clever, but the only use he made of his brains was to utter sarcastic remarks to everyone, and particularly to his wife.

These sisters were very envious when they saw

Beauty looking prettier than ever and dressed like a princess. In vain she kissed and fondled them; they could not hide their jealousy, which increased as they saw how happy she was. They both went into the garden to vent their spite, and to complain to each other.

"Why," said they, "is that creature so much happier than we? Are we not as deserving of happiness as she is?"

"Sister," said the eldest, "I have an idea; let us persuade her to overstay her time. Her stupid Beast will be enraged with her for not keeping her word, and probably he will devour her."

"What a clever plan!" said the other. "We must pretend to be very fond of her and make a great fuss about her."

With this wicked thought in their minds they went back into the cottage, and were so very loving in their speech and manner that poor Beauty almost wept for joy. At the end of the eight days, they made such a show of grief, tearing their hair and wringing their hands, that Beauty consented to stay another week, not without being very

sorry for the disappointment she was causing her poor Beast, whom she had grown so fond of, and whom she was longing to see again. On the tenth night of her visit, she dreamt she was in the palace garden, where she saw the Beast lying prone upon the grass, dying, and reproaching her for her ingratitude. She awoke with a start; then she began to weep.

"How wicked I am!" she said to herself. "How could I grieve the poor Beast who has been so good to me? Is it his fault that he is ugly and not clever? He is good, and that is worth more than cleverness or good looks. Why could I not marry him? I should have been much happier with him than my sisters are with their husbands. It is neither the good looks nor the cleverness of her husband that can make a woman happy; it is kindness of heart, uprightness, and readiness to oblige, and my poor Beast has all these good qualities. I may not be in love with him, but my heart is full of respect, friendship, and gratitude whenever I think of him. Come! I must not make him unhappy. I should reproach myself all my life if I did."

Beauty got up, put her ring on the table, and went back to bed. She quickly fell asleep, and when she awoke next morning she was pleased to find herself back in the palace of the Beast. She dressed herself magnificently to give him pleasure, and found the day pass all too slowly, waiting for nine o'clock. At last the hour struck, but the Beast did not make his appearance.

Beauty was greatly alarmed, fearing lest she had caused his death. She ran from room to room, calling him loudly, but she got no answer. She was almost in despair when she suddenly remembered her dream. Quick as thought, she turned and ran toward the garden. There, on the very spot she had seen in her sleep, lay her poor Beast, prone on the grass near the brook, quite unconscious and apparently dead. In an agony of grief she threw herself down over his body, without any sense of horror; then, finding that his heart was still beating, she brought water from the stream and bathed his temples. This revived him a little, and at length he opened his eyes.

After a little, the Beast found strength to speak

"You forgot your promise," said he, gazing at Beauty. "My grief at losing you was so great that I determined to starve myself to death, but I shall die happy now that I have had the great pleasure of seeing you again."

"No, my dear Beast, you shall not die," cried Beauty. "You must live to become my husband. From this moment I am yours. I imagined I had no stronger feeling for you than friendship, but now I know that I cannot live without you."

Just as Beauty finished this speech, the whole palace was brilliantly illuminated, while fireworks and music showed that some great event was being celebrated. Beauty looked up for a moment, but immediately turned again toward her dear Beast, for whose life she trembled. But where was he? What did it all mean? At her feet knelt a young Prince, handsome as Adonis, who was gratefully thanking her for having broken the spell of his enchantment. Although this Prince well deserved her attention, she quickly asked him:

"Where is my Beast?"

"You see him at your feet," was the reply. "A wicked fairy had condemned me to remain in

that dreadful form till a beautiful young lady should, of her own free will, consent to marry me, and I was strictly forbidden to show my intelligence. You alone of all those I have met were touched by my kindness of disposition in spite of my forbidding appearance, and in offering you my crown and my heart I do not pretend to be able to repay all I owe to you."

Beauty held out her hand to the Prince, in a dream of delighted surprise. He rose and clasped her hand in his, and they walked together to the palace. On entering the great hall, Beauty was overjoyed to see her dear father and all the family there. The beautiful lady whom she had seen in her dream had transported them there from the cottage.

This lady, who was a great fairy, now came forward.

"Beauty," said she, "come and receive the reward of your wise choice. You preferred high character to mere beauty, or even cleverness; you deserve to find all these united in one person. You are going to be a great queen. I hope that the throne will not alter your character."

"As for you, ladies," said the fairy to the sisters, "I know the malice which fills your hearts. You shall become statues, but you shall retain your reason inside the stone which imprisons you. You shall be placed one on each side of the door of your sister's palace, where your only punishment will be seeing your sister's happiness. When you recognize your faults and repent of them, you will be restored to your human forms, but I fear you are likely to remain statues. One may correct oneself of pride, bad temper, greed, or sloth, but to change an evil, envious heart is little short of a miracle."

Then, with one touch of her wand, she transported the whole company to the kingdom of the Prince, whose subjects received him with joy. Beauty and he were married with great pomp, the festivities lasting many days. The union was a very happy one, and at the end of a long life their love for each other was still undiminished.

LITTLE THUMBLING

ONCE, by the side of a great forest, there lived a poor woodman, who had a family of seven boys, all quite young, the eldest being only ten years old when the youngest was seven.

It seems strange to hear of such a large family with only three years between the eldest and the youngest, but the woodman's wife was an active clever woman, who never gave her husband fewer than two sons at a time, and on one occasion she presented him with three.

The parents were very proud of their large family, and they worked very hard to provide them all with food and clothing.

Six of the boys were fine strong lads, but the seventh was so small when he was born that he

was not much bigger than his father's thumb, and he was at once called Thumbling.

Unfortunately, Thumbling did not grow as the others did, but remained small and delicate. He was very timid and sensitive, and, as he seldom spoke a word, even his parents mistook his silence for stupidity.

The strong, healthy brothers found him always in the way, and the poor little fellow was blamed for everything that went wrong in the house. No one thought he would ever be able to earn his own living, or indeed be of any use in the world, yet he was really sharper and more observant than any of his brothers, and, if he talked little, he thought much, listened attentively to all he heard and knew more than most.

As the boys grew bigger, it took more to feed and clothe them, but the parents toiled cheerfully on, hoping that in a few years their sons would be able to help them, and that life would become easier for them all. Also, the elder boys could already help to weed and hoe the little garden which provided them with vegetables all summer as well as sufficient potatoes to store for the winter.

So long as seasons were good and harvests plentiful, all went well.

There came a spring, however, when frosts nipped all fruit in the bud. Then followed months of hot sun without one drop of rain to moisten the parched ground. The wheat was burnt in the blade, so that there was no corn to grind for flour to make bread. There was a great famine in the land, and the woodman's family were faced with starvation.

One evening, after the children had gone to bed, the poor father and mother sat by the dying embers of their fire, trying to think of some way out of their trouble. They were almost at the end of their little store, and had no money to buy more. They were quite at their wits' end.

After a long silence, the husband, in a broken voice, said to his wife:

"You see as well as myself that we can no longer feed our family. There is only slow death by starvation for them, and I, for one, cannot bear to see their sufferings. I see no way but to take them into the depth of the forest and leave them there. It will be easily done, as they could never

find their way out alone. We have only to go quietly out of sight while they amuse themselves gathering little bundles of sticks. Fear and fatigue will help to shorten their misery."

"What!" cried his wife, "has it actually come to this, that you would leave your own children to be lost in the forest, and to die there? No! I cannot consent to that. We are starving, but I am their mother—let us all die together!"

The father tried to show her that his way, being the quickest, was the best, and asked her to think of the agony it would be to see them dying one by one before her eyes, for, sooner or later, die they must.

At last, broken-hearted, she consented, and lay down on her bed weeping bitterly.

Little Thumbling had been awake when his parents began to talk. He had noticed during the last few weeks that both his father and his mother had looked sadder every day, and he began to understand what was meant when the famine was spoken of, so he slipped softly out of bed, and went under the stool his father sat on, where he could hear every word that was said.

LITTLE THUMBLING OVERHEARS HIS FATHER'S PLAN 120

When he heard his mother give her consent to his father's plan, he went quietly back to bed, where he lay awake all night, planning what to do.

Early in the morning he got up and went to a little stream which had a pebbly edge. There he gathered all the small white stones he could find, and filled his pockets with them; then he returned to the cottage, and started with the others to go to the forest, but he took care to be a little behind the others. Every few yards he dropped one of the white pebbles, so that the road they went could be traced by them, just as it is in a paper-chase.

The forest was so thick that no one could see his neighbour ten yards away.

The woodman began cutting wood, and the children busied themselves gathering branches of brushwood and tying them in little bundles for firewood.

While the children were so occupied, the parents went gradually farther from them till they came to a little by-path leading in another direction, when they quickly ran along it till they got out of

the forest, and returned to their cottage with heavy hearts.

As soon as the brothers realized that they had been forsaken, and were lost in the wood, they were terrified, and ran shouting and crying in every direction; then, getting no answer, they threw themselves, sobbing, on the ground.

Thumbling let them cry for some time, and he was of so little consequence in the eyes of his bigger brothers that they did not even notice how calm he was. Indeed, if they had, they would only have thought it was because he did not know their danger. Imagine their surprise when he suddenly addressed them.

"You need not be so frightened! Our father and our mother have certainly left us, but I know the way home. Follow me."

They followed him without a word, and guiding himself by the pebbles, he took them out of the forest by the way they had entered, leading them to the door of the cottage, where they were overcome by sudden fear of their parents, and dared not go in. But each one listened to try to hear what the father and mother might be saying.

Just as the woodman and his wife arrived at their cottage, after leaving their children in the forest, a messenger came from the squire to pay a bill which he had forgotten for such a long time that the poor couple never expected to get a penny of it.

The money was quite a large sum for them, and the sight of it seemed to give them new life. The woodman sent his wife off at once to the butcher's to get some meat for their supper, and as they were both very hungry she bought far more than was needed for two people. In her excitement she had quite forgotten that there were now no children to feed.

She cooked the whole of the meat, and when they had eaten till they were satisfied, and the woman saw how much was left, she cried out:

"Oh! where are my children? How they would enjoy all that we have left! They would make short work of it! It is all your fault! I told you we should repent of our work! What may be happening at this moment in that dark forest? God grant the cruel wolves may not have already devoured them Oh! where are my children?"

In her grief she exclaimed so loudly that the boys, listening at the door, heard the words distinctly, and shouted all together :

" Here we are, Mother ! Here we are ! "

Like lightning the mother flew to the door, and next moment her children were all clinging round her, while she hugged and kissed them one after the other, many times over.

" How glad I am to have you all again, my darlings ! How tired you all look, and how hungry you must be ! I see you have been falling—let me wipe the mud off your hands and faces, then you can eat your supper—look what a feast is waiting for you ! "

The boys needed no second invitation. They were, indeed, very hungry, and the food disappeared rapidly. The father and mother stood by, delighted to see their enjoyment, and listening, with tears in their eyes, while the seven, all speaking at once, related every little thing that had happened in the forest, and told what a dreadful fright they had got when they found themselves left alone.

These good souls were really glad to have their

children with them again, and, so long as the money lasted, they were very happy, but when it was all spent the grief returned. An empty purse and a bare cupboard again brought despair, and again there was no other way for them but the one already tried, only this time they must not fail. They planned to take the children much farther away, to the very thickest part of the forest, and took great care not to speak about it when they were near. Thumbling, however, was on the alert, and he could hide himself so easily that again he heard all, but it did not trouble him; his plan had been so successful before that he had no fear of not finding his way with equal ease this time.

He got up early, as before, to go to the river for pebbles, but, do what he could, he could not open the door—it was double-locked! He could see no way out of this difficulty till, just before starting, the mother gave each of the boys a piece of bread to eat for breakfast on the way. When no one was looking, he put his bread in his pocket, telling himself that little bits of bread would serve his purpose just as well as pebbles.

The parents, followed by their family, went out to their daily task of wood-cutting, as usual, but with very heavy hearts. They went much farther than they had ever gone before, till they came to what appeared to be a nice wide path. This they took for some distance, knowing well that it led to the thickest and darkest parts of the forest. Walking was easy in it, and the boys began playing and teasing each other, so it was not difficult for both father and mother to step aside and hide till their children went past, when they both fled as quickly as they could till they were far beyond the sound of the young voices.

Thumbling was the first to notice that they were left alone, but it did not worry him greatly, as he expected to retrace his steps easily by following the track of the bread-crumbs which he had taken care to scatter at intervals all the way; but when he turned to look for them, not a crumb was to be seen. The birds had picked them up almost as soon as he had thrown them down.

Here was a terrible plight to be in!

The six brothers shouted for help till they were hoarse, but no one came. They ran on, hoping

to get out of the wood, but the path grew narrower, and soon ended in an impenetrable tangle. Tired and hungry they sat down and wept—all but Thumbling, who kept trying to think what was the best thing to do, and did not see that tears could help him.

To make matters worse, a fearful storm came on, and it began to get near night. Rain came down in torrents, soaking their clothes to the skin. The wind roared through the great trees like an army of demons, and in every new gust they thought they heard the howling of wolves coming to devour them.

In the meantime little Thumbling had managed to climb to the top of a high tree, and in the gathering darkness he could see a light in a distant window. This gave the little fellow courage. Though his trousers were torn and his knuckles skinned by the furious lashing of the branches, he managed to get down to the ground, where he roused his brothers to make another effort to get out of the forest, telling them that there was a house near, and perhaps they could reach it, as he had seen the light of a window from the top of a

tree, though from the ground he could not show it to them.

They started again, keeping very close together, and going in the direction where Thumbling saw the light.

Many a time they fell, for the wet ground was slippery; also they could not see to avoid holes, and if one stumbled several fell over him; but terror made them go on. Once or twice, where the ground rose a little, they caught a glimpse of the light, but it seemed very far away, and in the hollows it was again blotted out.

They reached the edge of the forest at last, and, to their joy, the light was before them, but it was still a long way off. It seemed to be only a candle, but it was enough to guide them, even though they lost it whenever they got into a hollow, and at length they came to the house, which was quite a big one.

They knocked at the door. A kind-looking woman opened it and asked what they wanted. The brothers pushed little Thumbling forward to speak for them.

"We are children who got lost in the forest,"

said he, "and we have no place to shelter us from the storm. I beg you to let us sleep here for charity."

"Alas! my poor children," cried she, bursting into tears, "whatever brought you here? This is the house of an ogre who devours all the children he can find!"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Thumbling, who, like his brothers, was trembling with fear, "what shall we do? If we go back to the forest the wolves will tear us to pieces. I would rather be eaten by the gentleman, and perhaps, if you speak for us, he will take pity on us."

The woman had a tender heart, though her husband was an ogre. She took the children in, and let them warm themselves by the great kitchen fire, before which a whole sheep was being roasted for her husband's supper. She hoped to be able to hide them from him till morning, when she might be able to get them away before he awoke.

Just when they were getting comfortably warm, they heard three or four loud knocks on the door. It was the ogre, who had come back a little sooner than his wife expected. She hurriedly pushed all

the children below the bed, begging them to keep quite quiet, and neither to speak nor to move. Then she went to open the door for her husband, who immediately asked if his supper was ready, and if the wine had been brought from the cellar. Then he sat down to eat the sheep, which was not half cooked, for he liked it best when the blood was still quite red.

After a little while he began to sniff right and left, saying he smelt fresh meat.

"It must be that newly killed calf which I have just been dressing," said his wife.

"I smell living flesh, I tell you," said he, looking suspiciously at her. "There is some underhand work going on, I see!"

With these words he rose from the table and went straight to the bed.

"So this is how you deceive me, vile wretch!" cried he. "It is well for you that you are so old and tough or I would make my next meal of yourself!"

Then the ogre pulled one boy after another from below the bed, till the seven crouched trembling before him.

" This is a fine bag of game ! " he cried with glee. " It has come just in time to be a treat for my three ogre friends who are to visit me the day after to-morrow."

The terrified children threw themselves on their knees before him, entreating him not to kill them, and begging his pardon for having taken shelter in his house.

This, however, was one of the most cruel ogres in the land, and his horrid eyes gloated over them as if he were eating them already, while he remarked to his wife what delicious morsels they would be if she cooked them properly, and served them with the right sauce. He went for a great carving-knife, and came toward the children, sharpening it on a whetstone which he held in his left hand.

The poor innocents thought their last hour had come. He had already caught hold of the one nearest to him, when his wife exclaimed :

" Whatever are you going to do at this hour of the night ? Will you not have time enough to-morrow for such easy work ? "

" Hold your tongue ! " cried the ogre. " They

will be all the more tender for being killed to-night."

"But you forget," said she, "that you have too much meat already, and it will spoil! There are two sheep and a calf already killed, besides the half of a pig."

"I believe you are right," said the ogre. "Give them a good supper to keep them in perfect condition, and pack them off to bed."

The good woman was much relieved. She brought them an excellent supper, but the poor children were far too terrified to eat.

As for the ogre, he was so pleased to think of the feast he was going to have, and so thirsty from the one he had just finished, that he sat down again to drink. He took glass after glass, till his head became so heavy and stupid that he could only tumble into bed, where he lay like a log.

The ogre had seven small daughters, who had lovely complexions from eating all their meat raw, like their father, but they had little grey eyes, quite round, and sunk far back in their heads. They had hooked noses, which made them look like birds of prey, and large, cruel-looking mouths

with sharp-pointed teeth sticking out, with wide spaces between them. As yet, they were too young to be very dangerous, but as their greatest pleasure was to bite young children in order to suck their blood, they were likely to be very ferocious when they grew up.

They slept all together in a very large bed, and instead of a nightcap each little ogress had a crown of solid gold on her head.

In the same room there was another very large bed, into which the ogre's wife put the seven boys, making them as comfortable as she could before she went downstairs to sleep beside her husband.

The six strong boys slept soundly, but Thumbling lay awake trying to devise some means of escape.

He feared that if the ogre awoke and regretted having let them off for a few hours, he might come up and kill them before morning, so he set his brains to work harder than ever.

He had noticed, when passing the bed of the young ogresses, that each of them had a gold crown on, and his sharp wit showed him what to do. He got up softly, and very gently removed the

crowns, without waking the sleeping ogresses. Then he took the damp woolly caps which he and his brothers had still on their heads when put to bed, and slipped one over the hair of each ogress. Then he put the crowns on his brothers' heads and his own, and lay down to keep watch.

It all happened just as he expected.

The ogre awoke a little after midnight, and remembered the dainty morsels that had come to him so unexpectedly.

"What a fool I was not to kill them at once," said he; "something might happen to deprive me of them even yet. I shall go up and make sure of them." So saying, he rolled out of bed and got hold of his great knife.

"We shall see what the rogues are doing," said he; "I shall make short work of them!"

He did not want to disturb his wife, as she might have been troublesome, so he did not ask for a candle, but groped his way up in the dark, and went straight to where he knew the boys were sleeping. He passed his great hand over each head, to the terror of Thumbling, who could hardly keep from betraying himself by screaming

out. The others, sleeping soundly, did not know the danger they were in.

The giant seemed to hesitate. He muttered something and felt again, but, sure enough, they were crowns.

"That's a nice trick I had nearly played!" said he to himself. "I must have taken a good deal more wine than I thought last night, to make such a mistake in my own house!"

He then went to the other bed, and, groping as before, laid hold of a boy's wool cap.

"Ah! here you are, you rascals! To work, then, at once!" Without a moment's hesitation, he cut the throats of all the seven, and went down again, well pleased, to his bed.

Thumbling went on tiptoe to the door, which the ogre had left open, and stood listening till he heard the loud snoring of the ogre; then he went back to his brothers, whom he wakened, telling them to dress as quickly as they could and to follow him silently downstairs.

They managed to get out to the garden without the ogre hearing—perhaps the kind-hearted wife had left the door unbolted, hoping the boys might

get away. They soon climbed over the wall and ran for their lives, trembling in every limb, and not knowing where they were going.

When the ogre awoke he roused his wife.

"Go upstairs," said he, "and dress those little rascals that arrived last night."

The woman was astounded at her husband's kindness, thinking he meant her to put on the little lads' clothes, not dreaming that he was ordering her to prepare them to be eaten at table. She went upstairs, pleased to help the little fellows she had such a liking for, but what a sight met her eyes! On the bed lay her seven daughters, quite dead! It was too much! She fainted in the doorway, as most women would have been likely to do.

The ogre thought she was taking a long time to prepare the children, and, being very particular about his food, he went up to help her. He got as great a shock as his wife had done, but he was much stronger to stand it.

"Oh! what have I done?" he shouted, his voice shaking the whole house. "The wretches shall pay for it, and soon!"

With that he lifted a jug of water, and threw it in his wife's face. As soon as he saw her beginning to recover, he cried :

" Give me my seven-league boots, and be quick about it—I must catch the little villains ! "

As soon as he had pulled on his seven-league boots, he rushed out, striding over the country in every direction. Fortunately for them, the boys had five or six hours' start, and fear had lent wings to their feet. They could already see their father's house on the other side of the valley, when they saw the ogre coming in their direction, striding from hill to hill, and stepping over rivers as easily as they could cross tiny brooks.

Thumbling's quick eyes saw a hollow beneath a big rock, quite near. He hid his brothers in it, and crept in after them, but he did not let himself lose sight of the ogre.

Seven-league boots are very tiring to the wearer, and the giant began to feel weary. As bad luck would have it, he sat down to rest on the very rock under which the brothers were hiding. As he was dreadfully tired, he soon fell fast asleep, and the noise of his snoring was so great that the

boys were nearly as frightened as they had been when he brought out his great knife to kill them. Brave little Thumbling was less frightened than the others; he told his brothers that the giant was too fast asleep to waken for some time, and he advised them to creep out very quietly and make for home as quickly as they could. They were not to worry about leaving him alone, as he felt quite able to take care of himself. The boys were only too glad to take the advice, and as soon as they were a few yards away they set off as quickly as their legs would carry them.

Thumbling was now left alone. He went quietly up to the ogre, and gently pulled off the seven-league boots, which he promptly put on his own feet. Each boot, as he drew it on, was big enough to swallow him and all his brothers, but, being made by the fairies, it could stretch or draw in to suit the wearer, and the pair fitted Thumbling as if they had been made for him.

The first use he made of them was to go straight to the house of the ogre, where he found the poor mother weeping beside the bodies of her daughters.

"Your husband," said little Thumbling to her,

" is in great danger. He fell into the hands of a gang of robbers, who have sworn to kill him if he does not give them everything he possesses. Just when they had their daggers at his breast, he caught sight of me, and begged them to wait till he sent me to you. I am to ask you to give me all his gold and silver, and all his valuables; otherwise they will kill him without mercy. As there is no time to lose, he has lent me, as you see, his seven-league boots to reach you more quickly, and to prove that I am not an impostor."

The poor woman was in greater distress than ever, for although the ogre ate little children he was, after all, her husband. She quickly got all his money and valuables together, and handed them to Thumbling, who sped with them to his father's cottage, where the whole family received him with great joy.

Many people say that Thumbling never robbed the ogre of his riches in this way, though he made no scruple about taking the boots, knowing that the ogre only used them to steal little children that he might eat them.

Some of these people say they can assure us,

on the best authority, having been in the wood-cutters' house, and having sat at their table, that Thumbling did not go back to the ogre's house at all. They say that he went to the Court, where he had learned that the King was anxious to know the result of a great battle which his army had been fighting in a distant country with which he was at war, and offered his services, saying he would bring the news before the next morning. The King promised to give him a great sum of money if he could do so, and, thanks to his own nimbleness and the seven-league boots, he brought the news that very evening. The fame of his wonderful speed spread everywhere. The King gave him a great salary as his principal courier, and as so many people wanted news of husbands, sons, brothers, or lovers who were in the army, he made a great fortune in a very short time. He provided a nice home for his parents, who never needed to work again, and got his brothers educated and put into honourable posts.

As I was not there to see, I do not know which of these tales is true, nor do I know what became of the ogre, but I myself think the ogre died of

sunstroke after his exertions when hunting for the boys in the great heat, and that Thumbling, being sorry for the poor wife who had done her best for him and his brothers, and thinking her too good to be called an ogress, made her housekeeper, with charge over all his servants, at the great castle which he built for himself near the forest where his parents had worked.

RIQUET WITH THE TUFT

ONCE a Queen had a little boy who came into the world so unpleasing in face and so deformed in body that the poor little fellow looked hardly human.

Naturally this was a great grief to the mother, who loved her son, and wished everyone else to love him.

A fairy who was present at his birth assured her that, in spite of his appearance, the babe would be a most lovable child, and that he would make up for his want of good looks by his great intelligence and his kind disposition, besides which, as her gift, she had just endowed him with the power of making the lady he should love best one of the wittiest and cleverest people in the world.

The fairy's speech cheered and comforted the

Queen, for she knew that, though beauty is a valuable gift, it can be easily destroyed, but that intelligence and sweetness of temper are lifelong attractions.

By the time the child began to speak, the fairy's words were proved true, for he astonished all around him with his witty remarks, and with the sweet way he had of saying just the right thing; also, in all his little actions there was such cleverness and grace of manner that everybody was charmed with him.

I forgot to tell you that he was born with a little tuft of hair on the top of his head, so that he was at once named Riquet with the Tuft, for Riquet was the family surname.

Seven or eight years later, the Queen of a neighbouring kingdom had twin daughters. The first-born was as beautiful as the dawn, and so great was the mother's joy that the attendants feared lest she should suffer from over-excitement. The fairy who had presided at the birth of little Riquet with the Tuft was again present, so she told the Queen that the little Princess, though charmingly pretty, would have very little intelli-

gence, and would be as dull and stupid as she was beautiful.

This speech damped the Queen's spirits very much, but an even greater disappointment awaited her, for, when the second daughter was born, she was found to be one of the plainest-looking children ever seen, and the poor mother was terribly grieved about it.

"Do not distress yourself so much, Madam," said the fairy; "your little daughter will have much to make her happy. Her wit and liveliness will be such that no one will notice her want of good looks."

"God grant it may be so!" replied the Queen. "But have you no means of giving a little good sense to my poor pretty one?"

"I can do nothing for her in the matter of intelligence," said the fairy, "but where beauty is concerned I can do much, and, as there is nothing I would not do to please you, I now give her power to endow the person she loves best with beauty as great as her own."

As these twin Princesses grew up, their attractions increased, and the whole talk at Court was

about the beauty of the elder, and the intelligent wit of the younger.

True, their defects also became more apparent, the younger becoming every day visibly plainer, while the elder daily grew more dull and stupid. When spoken to, she either made no answer at all or said something foolishly rude. She was so awkward in her movements that she could not arrange four china ornaments on a shelf without letting one fall, nor could she drink out of a glass without spilling half of its contents over her clothes.

Although beauty adds so much to the charm of youth, in this case it was the plain Princess who, in every company, attracted the most attention. At first people might go to where the beautiful elder Princess sat, that they might see and admire her, but they soon tired of her senseless remarks, and left her to join the circle which gathered round the plain sister, whose agreeable conversation and sparkling wit charmed all listeners. Sometimes people so far forgot their good manners as to leave the poor beauty all alone; stupid though she was, she could not help noticing this, and she would willingly have given all her beauty

in exchange for one half of her younger sister's intelligence.

Her silliness was so irritating that everyone's patience got worn out, and even the Queen, though a most wise and prudent lady, could not help reproaching her repeatedly for her stupid rudeness, so that the poor Princess was often miserably unhappy.

One day she went alone into the wood near the palace, to weep over her lot without being seen, and she noticed, coming toward her, a small and very ugly young man, magnificently dressed. It was the young Prince Riquet with the Tuft, who had fallen in love with her from seeing her portrait, which hung on the walls of every castle he visited. He had come all the way from his father's kingdom, a very long way off, to have the pleasure of seeing her personally, and, if possible, of entering into conversation with her.

Delighted to find the beautiful Princess alone, he went forward with respectful politeness, and, bowing low, begged to be allowed to introduce himself. After he had talked to her for some time, paying her many compliments, but getting no

"If that is all that troubles you, Madam, I can easily put an end to your sorrow!" said Riquet with the Tuft.

"What can you do in the matter?" asked the Princess.

"Madam," replied he, "I can endow the person I love best with as much cleverness as any one could wish to possess, and, as you are that person, it remains with yourself to choose whether or not you will become the most witty lady in the world. One condition, however, must be observed—you must be willing to marry me."

The Princess was dumbfounded—she answered not a word!

"I see," continued Riquet with the Tuft, "that the bare idea is painful to you, and that does not surprise me, so I will give you a whole year to make up your mind."

The poor stupid Princess thought a year was such a long time that it would hardly ever come to an end, and, having a great desire to be as clever as her sister, she promised to marry Riquet with the Tuft a year from that day.

No sooner had she given her promise than

such a marvellous change came over her that she felt like a different creature. She could think clearly and express her ideas with astonishing ease, speaking on every subject with keen intelligence, and using the most refined and polished language.

She began a bantering conversation with the Prince, when her ready wit and brilliant sallies made him ask himself whether he had not made her more clever than himself.

On her return to the palace, the amazing change in the Princess was so evident that the whole Court was surprised and puzzled. No one knew what to make of it, for, whereas they had once never heard her speak without saying something silly or rude, or both, now she spoke with the good sense and quiet dignity of a highly cultivated lady, fit to be the partner of the most particular of kings or princes.

The joy at Court was extreme. From the King and Queen to the humblest attendant, everyone was delighted with the lively wit which now added such a charm to their beautiful Princess. The younger sister alone found it impossible to rejoice.

It was indeed hard on her, for the one advantage which her cleverness had given her over her stupid but beautiful sister was now of no account; everyone crowded round the brilliant beauty, without taking the trouble to notice her poor, plain-looking self, for even in Courts people can be selfishly neglectful of other people's feelings.

The elder sister was now as much sought after for her wisdom as for her beauty. The King took her advice in everything that concerned his government, and he even held his privy council in her room.

The rumour of this great change spread far and wide, and all the princes of the neighbouring kingdoms vied with each other as suitors for the hand of the beautiful Princess, who listened courteously to one after another, but as she found none of them sufficiently interesting to please her, she accepted none. If you think it strange that she had forgotten her promise to Riquet with the Tuft you will hear shortly how this came about.

Finally came a young Prince who was so powerful, so rich, so clever, and so very handsome that she could not help feeling attracted by him.

Her father noticed this, and told her that he left her quite free to choose the husband she preferred; she had only to tell him when her choice was made.

The more good sense people have, the more difficult they find it to decide in such an important affair as marriage. The Princess thanked her father, and asked to be allowed a little time for reflection before deciding.

As she wished to be alone with her thoughts, she went out for a quiet walk, and entered the wood without remembering that, a year before, in this very wood, she had promised to marry the Prince whose marvellous gift had made her so intelligent. Indeed, the first result of that gift had been that all memory of her former stupid words and actions was quite blotted out.

For a while she walked on, in deep thought, but after a little time she became aware of dull muffled sounds somewhere quite near, so she stood still to listen.

The sounds seemed to come from beneath her feet, as if many people were busily working underground, and she even heard their voices and could distinguish their words.

"Fetch me the pan," said one. "Hand me that kettle," said another. "Put more wood on the fire," said a third.

As the Princess stood bewildered, the ground in front of her opened, and, to her utter amazement, she saw the interior of a great kitchen, with men-servants and maids busily engaged in preparing a grand banquet.

At the same time a band of twenty or thirty men who had charge of the roasting came out, and went to take their places round a long table placed in an alley of the wood. Each had his larding-pin in his hand, and they all began to work heartily together, keeping time to a merry song.

The astonished Princess asked for whom they were preparing such a feast.

"We are preparing the wedding-feast of Prince Riquet with the Tuft, Madam," was the reply. "He is to be married to-morrow."

The words recalled in a flash her promise to the Prince, and she stood stunned and ready to fall, as if she had received a blow. Recovering herself, she walked on a few paces, and suddenly found

herself face to face with the Prince, magnificently arrayed as became a royal bridegroom.

Riquet with the Tuft advanced joyfully to meet her.

"How delighted I am, dear Princess, to find you as punctual as myself in keeping our appointment! I had hardly dared to hope that you would come yourself to meet me, and to make me the happiest man in the world by giving me your hand."

The Princess drew back coldly and replied:

"I must confess that I had no such intention. I have not yet made up my mind on the subject, nor do I think I shall ever be able to grant your request."

"Your words astonish me, Madam," said the Prince, completely taken aback.

"I quite believe you," said the Princess, "and if I had to deal with a coarse, vulgar fellow, too stupid to take in the situation, I should indeed be in a difficulty, but as I am addressing the most refined and intelligent gentleman in the whole world, I feel quite sure that you yourself will see how impossible it would be for me to keep a

promise made when I had not the sense to know what I was doing. If you really wished me to marry you, it would have been wiser not to have made me so difficult to please that I have already rejected the handsomest princes who have asked me in marriage."

"Madam," said Riquet with the Tuft, "you have admitted that a coarse and stupid man might have held you to your word! Is it just or kind to treat me worse than such a fellow, because I am a gentleman? Surely that cannot be approved by one who so greatly desired the gift of wit and wisdom for herself! But, be that as it may, let us come to facts. Permit me to ask, Madam, if, apart from my appearance, there is anything else about me which displeases you? Do you disapprove of my birth, my character, or my manners?"

"Not at all," said the Princess; "in all these I find you perfect."

"If that is so," said Riquet with the Tuft, "I may yet be happy, as you yourself can make me the most lovable of men, even in appearance."

"How can I possibly do that?" asked the Princess.

"By loving me so much that you wish me to be handsome, Madam; for the same fairy who gave me power to make you wise, gave you, at your birth, the power to make the man you love as handsome as you are beautiful."

"If that is so," said the Princess, "I desire with all my heart that you may become the finest-looking Prince in the wide world!"

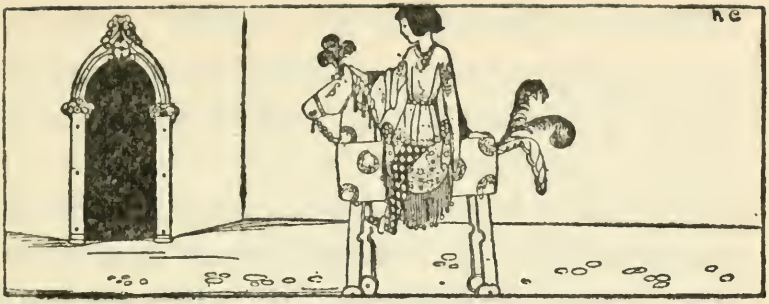
The Princess had no sooner uttered the words than Prince Riquet with the Tuft stood before her transformed!

In face, in person, and in bearing she felt she had never seen his equal.

Some people tell us that it was not the fairy's magic which worked the change. They say that, as "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder," it was the great love that filled the heart of the Princess when she thought of all the Prince's goodness of heart and other great qualities that made her see him in quite a different light. However that may be, the Princess was eager to marry Prince Riquet with the Tuft as soon as she could obtain her father's consent. This the King gave at once, for he had long heard of the Prince's great intelligence

and sweetness of disposition, and now that he saw him and heard him speak he was highly pleased to have him for his son-in-law. So the marriage took place the very next day, all the Court sharing in the festivities which had already been prepared by the Prince's retainers.

Prince Riquet with the Tuft and his beautiful and witty Princess lived long and happily together, admired and loved by their loyal subjects in every part of their kingdom.



THE WHITE CAT

THERE was once a King who had three grown-up sons, and, fearing that their ambition might make them wish him out of the way in order that one or other of them might reign in his stead, he called them to him, and said :

" I wish to give up my Crown to one of you, but I think it is only right that you should, in the meantime, do your very best to please me. When I leave the throne I intend to retire to some place in the country, and as I might feel a little lonely, I think I should like to have a nice little dog to bear me company, so that one of you who will bring me the prettiest little dog shall be King in my place."

The Princes were rather surprised, but they

at once prepared to say good-bye to their father, who told them to return in exactly a year from that day.

The three brothers swore eternal friendship for each other, and changed their names for fear of being recognized. Then they set out, all taking different roads.

The two elder had many adventures, but we shall only relate those of the youngest, who was both the handsomest and the most accomplished of the three.

He lost no time before starting his search. Every day he bought a new dog, parting with it as soon as he found a better bred or more handsome one.

One evening his road lay through a forest, and when he was about the middle of it a fearful thunderstorm came on; rain fell in torrents, he got wet to the skin, and, worst of all, he lost his way in the darkness. After wandering about without knowing even the direction in which he was going, he suddenly saw a bright light through an opening of the trees, and he gladly went toward it, soon finding himself at the

entrance to a superb palace. The gate was of burnished gold studded with gems, whose brilliance lighted up the whole surroundings. This was the light that had guided him. A stag's foot hung from the gate by a chain of diamonds; the Prince took hold of this and gave a tug, when he heard the ringing of a little gold bell inside.

A moment elapsed, then the door opened of itself. No one was visible, but a dozen hands, each holding a torch in the air, lighted up the entrance. He stood amazed and irresolute, but other hands from behind pushed him firmly forward. He went on, grasping the hilt of his sword, prepared for all risks, but on entering a marble hall two melodious voices begged him to have no fear of the hands which he saw. Thus encouraged, he went forward through endless suites of splendidly furnished rooms, all marvellously lit up. After conducting him through at least sixty apartments, the guiding hands stopped. A great armchair moved forward to the fireplace, where the fire began to burn brightly, and the hands took off his wet

clothing. They drew forward a dressing-table furnished with the most costly articles for the toilet, they combed and brushed his hair, and dressed him in a much grander suit than any he had ever had. When they had finished, he looked as handsome as a young Greek god, and they led him to the superb dining-hall, on the walls of which were hung the portraits of all the cats famous in story—Puss in Boots, the Writing Cat, the Lady-Cat, the Sorcerers who had become Cats—and also all the rites and ceremonies of the Witch-revels.

The table was laid for two. The Prince was asking himself: "Why two?" when he saw some cats taking their places in a specially arranged orchestra. One had a music-book, another, evidently the conductor, had a roll of paper to beat time, and the others had small guitars. They all began to mew in different tones, and to twang the strings of the guitars. It was a strange concert, and the Prince clapped his hands over his ears to shut out the discord, while he swayed with laughter at the grimaces made by the cat musicians.

Then entered a little figure about twenty inches high. The little creature was covered from head to foot with a veil of black crape. She was accompanied by two cats, who were also in mourning, and each had a sword hanging at his side. An escort of cats followed, carrying rat-traps full of rats and cages filled with mice.

The little figure threw back her veil, and the Prince saw the most lovely little white pussy-cat he had ever seen in his life. She looked very young and very sad, and she mewed to him so sweetly that his heart was quite touched with pity.

" King's Son," said she, " you are welcome. My mewing Majesty sees you with pleasure."

" Madam Puss," replied the Prince, " I thank you; but you are not an ordinary pussy-cat—your gift of speech, and your splendid castle, show me that."

" Cease paying me compliments," said Pussy. " I am simple in manner, but I like to be kind. Come, stop the music and serve supper."

Hands brought in supper and put it on the table. There were two dishes, one of stewed

pigeons, the other of fat mice. Puss assured the Prince that he could eat without fear, as his food would always be separately cooked and served, so he ate with hearty appetite and enjoyed his supper. He noticed that the cat wore a portrait on a bracelet round her little front paw, and he asked her if he might see it. She showed it him willingly, and his surprise was great, for it was that of a young man so like himself that it might easily have been mistaken for his own.

After supper White Puss took her guest to a room where there was a platform arranged as a stage, on which a dozen cats and as many monkeys danced a ballet very cleverly. Then she wished the Prince good night, and he was conducted by the hands to a bedroom which was even more splendid than the one he had been in before supper.

The next morning the Prince was awakened by a great stir and noise in the court of the castle. The attendant hands dressed him in hunting-costume. He went to look out of the window, and in the park he saw a great concourse of over five hundred cats, some holding

greyhounds in leash, others winding their horns. White Puss was going hunting and wished the Prince to accompany her.

The hands mounted him on a wooden horse which either went at full gallop or walked, as desired.

White Puss herself rode on a monkey. She had taken off her veil and wore a dragoon's helmet, which gave her such a commanding appearance that all the mice were terrified when they saw her.

When the day's sport was ended, White Puss took a little hunting-horn, not more than three inches long, and blew two or three blasts, when all the cats came crowding round her. She returned to the castle with this feline escort, and again invited the Prince to go with her. He consented from politeness, but all this behaviour on the part of cats seemed to him too much like witches' enchantments.

They again supped together, and the fine wines the Prince drank made him completely forget about the little dog he was searching for to take to his father. He seemed to think of

nothing but White Puss, and even forgot his country so far as to wish at times that he were a cat to pass the rest of his life in such good company, for there was no game or sport of any kind that White Puss would not set a-going for his entertainment; sometimes she even invented new games to amuse him.

It was almost a year since the Prince had left home, but he did not remember the fact till White Puss said to him one day:

"Do you know that you have only three days now left to seek for the little dog your father wants? Your two brothers have got beauties."

"What!" exclaimed the Prince. "Have I actually forgotten the very thing I left home to do? Where shall I find such a little dog as is needed? And if I had it, where is the horse swift enough to take me to my father's palace in three days?"

He was in great distress, but White Puss came to the rescue.

"The wooden horse will not take one day to carry you home to your father's, and, as far

as the little dog is concerned, here is an acorn containing one which is more lovely than the dog-star itself. Hold the acorn to your ear and you will hear it yelping.

"It is, however, important that no one should know of this little dog till you open it in the presence of your father. Promise me this."

The Prince was overjoyed. He readily gave his promise, thanked White Puss a thousand times for all her kindness, then mounted the wooden horse and set off.

He was the first of the three to arrive at the castle where he and his brothers had appointed to meet each other. As he dared not tell them of his extraordinary adventures, nor speak of the acorn he carried, he took a quite common dog with him, and they, very naturally, supposed it was the one he intended to offer the King, but they made no remark.

Next morning the three sons went together to their father. Each of the two elder carried a small basket, with a lovely little dog; these animals were so exquisitely fine and small that they seemed almost too fragile to be handled

without hurting them. The dog led by the youngest looked quite horrid by contrast with these dainty little animals.

The King found it difficult to decide which was the prettier of the two little dogs, when the youngest son settled the matter by opening the acorn given him by White Puss. Inside there was a tiny dog lying on cotton-wool. It was so small it could go through a lady's ring, yet it was full of energy, and danced on its tiny hind legs to the great delight of everyone present. It was so perfect in form and so dainty that the King was speechless with wonder. There could be no longer any doubt as to which of the sons had brought the best little dog.

The King, however, did not want to give up his Crown quite yet, so he told his sons that he would give them another year to seek for a piece of linen, so fine that it could pass through the eye of a needle such as is used in making Venetian point lace.

Each of the three set out again, but with fewer professions of friendship than before, the episode of the marvellous little dog having

caused a certain degree of coolness between them.

Our Prince returned to the castle of White Puss, who had been very ill since he went away. When she saw him safe back, she recovered immediately and jumped high for sheer joy.

The Prince told her the result of his journey, and what the new quest was to be.

" That will be quite easy to procure," said she. " Some of my cats can spin thread like gossamer, so the piece of linen will be ready in time for you."

In the evening they had great fireworks to celebrate the Prince's return, and four cats which had stolen White Pussy's cheese and had been condemned to death were pardoned and set free, by request of the Prince, so no sadness clouded the joy of the evening.

For many weeks sports, games, and theatrical entertainments followed each other in rapid succession. White Puss was so clever that every day she found something interesting to do or to see, and this second year passed as quickly as the first had done.

White Puss, who never forgot to watch over the welfare of the Prince, told him again when it was time for him to return to his father. This time she gave him an equipage and an escort worthy of his royal birth. There was an open carriage of solid gold, drawn by twelve white horses, whose red velvet housings were thickly embroidered with diamonds. It was followed by a hundred coaches, each drawn by eight grey horses, the coaches being filled with the great lords of the court in superb uniforms, and the carriages were accompanied by a thousand gentlemen of the Guards, mounted on chestnut steeds, and on the carriages and harness everywhere were ornamental devices with the portrait of the White Cat.

"Go and prosper," said she to the Prince. "Take this walnut with you. Do not break it till you are in the presence of the King; you will find in it the linen you desire."

"Dear little White One," said he, "I should prefer living here with you to any other earthly grandeur."

"King's Son," said she, "you are kind, and

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your affection for a poor little cat who is good for nothing but catching mice."

The Prince kissed the little white paw and departed.

This time he was the last of the three to arrive, and his brothers had already unfolded for the King's inspection their pieces of linen, so fine that they could be threaded through the eye of a darning needle, but neither of the pieces was sufficiently fine to pass through the eye of the fine lace-making needle which the King held in his hand. The linen these two Princes brought was really so fine that many people were dissatisfied with the King for being so exacting. While the matter was being discussed there was the sound of delightful music outside the palace—it was our young Prince arriving with his retinue.

He entered, saluted his father and kissed his brothers; then he produced the walnut and cracked it, but instead of a piece of linen he found a hazel-nut. This also he cracked, and found a cherry-stone. The courtiers looked at

each other, and the King laughed quietly to himself. The Prince grew very red, but proceeded to break the cherry-stone, which was quite filled with its own kernel. Then, indeed, everyone laughed aloud and made game of him. He took no notice of their ironical remarks, but opened the kernel, where he found a grain of wheat, and in the wheat one grain of bird-seed. Then he could not help saying to himself: "White Puss, White Puss, you are playing a practical joke on me!"

At that moment an unseen paw scratched the back of his hand, so that it bled slightly. Reassured, he opened the seed and, to the amazement of all, drew out a piece of linen four hundred yards long, on which were painted all kinds of birds, animals, and fishes, with trees, shrubs, and fruit. Besides all these, there were the sun, moon, and stars, and the portraits of all the reigning sovereigns in the world.

When the King saw this web unfolded, he became as white as his son had become red while searching for it. It was passed and repassed through the needle six times.

The King drew a long sigh; then, turning to his children, he said :

" Go and travel for yet another year, and he who will bring home the most beautiful young lady shall marry her and be crowned King. I wish my successor to be married, and I give you my word for it that I shall not again delay the reward."

As our Prince had already been twice successful, the injustice of his father's action fell entirely on him, but he was far too respectful to complain. He said not a word, but went back to his dear little White Puss.

She was expecting him, and was seated on a daïs under a pavilion of cloth of gold. The road was strewn with flowers, and all the cats mewed their best to bid him welcome.

" Well ! " she exclaimed. " Do you return again without your crown ? "

" Madam," replied the Prince, " I believe it is grieving my father more to part with his Crown than it is going to please me to possess it."

" That makes no difference," said she; " you

must do your best to deserve it, and since your father now wants a beautiful young lady to be taken to his Court, I shall seek for one who will win the prize for you. In the meantime let us go on with the rejoicings I had arranged for your return. There is to be a naval engagement between my cats and the terrible rats of this country. My cats will find fighting at sea difficult, as they have a great fear of water, but otherwise they would have a very unfair advantage, and as I like to be just, we must equalize things."

The Prince praised her wise planning, and went with her to a terrace close to the sea.

The vessels of the cats were huge pieces of cork. The rats' boats were made of egg-shells joined to each other. The combat was a terrible one. Twenty times the rats were vanquished and victorious by turns, but at last Admiral Minagrobis, who commanded the feline fleet, reduced the rats to despair by eating up their general, and White Puss gave the signal to stop fighting. She had no desire to destroy the enemy completely. She reflected that, if there

were neither rats nor mice in the country, her subjects would have nothing to hunt and would live in idleness, which would be fatal to the race.

The Prince spent this year like the two former ones, riding, hunting, fishing, or playing chess, a game in which White Puss excelled. Many times the Prince asked her to tell him if she were really a fairy, or if some fairy had turned her into a cat, but instead of giving him a direct answer she always beat about the bush in such a manner that he could make neither head nor tail of her meaning, and he concluded that she did not wish to be questioned on the subject.

The Prince would again have forgotten the end of the year, had not White Puss told him, the evening before the day he had to start, that it was for himself to decide whether or not he would take back a beautiful Princess to his father's Court. She told him that the hour for undoing the fatal work of the fairies had come, and that all he needed to do was to cut off her head and her tail and throw them into the fire.

"I!" cried he in horror. "Oh! little White

One, you are putting me to a terrible test! I am quite incapable of acting thus toward my kindest and best friend!"

She tried to persuade him to steel himself to do as she asked him, but all her eloquence failed, till she at last assured him that both his own happiness and hers depended on his complying with her request. Then, with a trembling hand, he drew his sword and cut off both her head and her tail.

Was he dreaming? What had happened? Instead of his poor White Puss, there stood before him the most beautiful girl his eyes had ever beheld.

At first he believed himself to be under some enchantment, but it was far otherwise. His action had broken the spell under which his dear White Puss, as well as all the inmates of the castle, had lain.

They trooped in, lords and ladies, with their cat-skins thrown across their shoulders, and all pressed forward to pay court to their dear young Queen, who received them with great kindness. Then she asked them all to retire for a while,

as she wished to speak privately to the Prince. When they had withdrawn, and she was left alone with the Prince, she said :

" Do not think I was always a cat, or that my birth was not quite equal to your own. My father was monarch over six kingdoms. My mother, who loved to travel, wanted to go to a certain great mountain, and on the way she was told that near it was an enchanted castle into which no one dared enter but the fairies to whom it belonged, and that in the castle garden were found the finest fruits of the whole world. The Queen, my mother, had a great desire to taste some of these fruits, so she went to the door of the magnificent building and knocked repeatedly, but got no answer. She asked some of her attendants to climb over the garden walls, but the walls grew higher and higher, and when they brought ladders, these broke, and the men who were on them fell and were killed. The Queen got tents pitched quite near to the castle, and stayed there with her followers for six weeks. She was taken with a great sickness, and her people feared she was going to die.

One night she saw a very ugly little old woman sitting by her bed, and presently the visitor began to speak :

" ' Since you are so determined to have some of our fruit,' said she, ' we shall give you some, but in return you must also make us a gift.'

" ' Oh ! for that,' said the Queen, ' just ask what you want.'

" ' We want the little daughter who is coming to you soon. We shall come to fetch her as soon as she is born. She shall be our child, and we shall take good care of her and make her happy, but you shall not be allowed to see her again till she is married. Are you willing to accept our conditions ? '

" ' Quite willing,' said the Queen, ' for I feel I shall die soon, and a motherless child might be worse off than under your care.'

" The old fairy, having obtained this promise, then touched the Queen with her wand and cured her of her illness. My mother called her ladies and asked them to dress her at once, as she was going to call at the enchanted palace.

At first they thought she was delirious, but finding they were mistaken, they dressed her, and she followed the old fairy. They entered the castle (the one in which we now are), and two fairies received them and bade the Queen welcome. They asked her if she wished the different fruits to come to her of their own accord, and my mother said she would like to see such an extraordinary sight.

" The old woman whistled three times, then called : ' Apricots, peaches, cherries, plums, pears, melons, apples, oranges, gooseberries, raspberries, come here ! '

" ' But,' said the Queen, ' these fruits ripen at different seasons ! '

" ' Not so, here,' replied the two fairies.

" There and then the fruits arrived pell-mell, neither bruising nor soiling themselves. Afterward the Queen went into the garden, where she spent three days and three nights gathering store for the winter, and as none of the fruits ever spoiled, she had four thousand mules loaded with them to send home.

" When my mother left, the fairies promised

her that they would give me the education needed for my rank as a Princess, and that they would invite her to my wedding when they should have found me a suitable husband.

"The King was delighted to have my mother back, and greatly enjoyed eating the splendid fruit. He did not know of the strange promise my mother had made to the fairies, neither did she tell him exactly where she had been.

"As the time when I was expected drew near, he Queen became very low-spirited, and deeply regretted her promise. At last she told the King all about it. He reproached her very severely for her foolishness, and then put her in a room in a tower, with guards all round it, to prevent her from giving away the little daughter, and he got nurses to take care of me night and day in his own palace.

"The fairies sent to fetch me, as they had arranged, but the escort were ugly little dwarfs, whom the King did not even receive civilly. The fairies were terribly angry, and after having sent every imaginable plague into his six kingdoms, they let loose their horrible dragon,

which ate men, women, and children, and killed all the plants with its scorching breath.

" In vain the King consulted all the wise men and the magicians; none of them could help him. At last he went to ask advice from an old fairy whom he knew. She told him to give me to the fairies as had been promised, and to pardon the Queen and set her at liberty, telling him that by doing so he would avert further evils, and would bring prosperity to his subjects. The King found this very hard, as he loved his little daughter, but at last consented, to save his people from greater disasters.

" It was arranged that, eight days later, he and my mother would take me in my cradle to the mountain of flowers, half-way between their palace and that of the fairies, and that they should wait there till the fairies came to fetch me.

" The Queen was pardoned, and with the King she arranged for the ceremony to take place with due respect to my rank.

" My cradle was made of mother-of-pearl. It was put on a light hand-barrow made of gold,

and twenty-four Princesses of the royal blood were appointed to carry it. The whole of the ladies and gentlemen of the Court accompanied me.

" While they were carrying me up the flower-mountain there was a sudden burst of music, heralding the arrival of the fairies. There were thirty-six of them, all very old and very ugly. Each held an olive branch in her hand as a sign of peace. They were followed by the dragon which had been sent before to avenge them when my father had refused to give me up. The monster was led by a chain of diamonds attached to its neck.

" The thirty-six fairies almost smothered me with kisses; then they began their fairy-reel, which is a very merry dance round a circle made on the ground. Afterward the dragon came forward, and the three fairies to whom my mother had promised me seated themselves on its back, holding my cradle on their knees. The dragon spread out his great scaly wings, as fine as silk crape, and sped off through the air to the fairy palace.

" When my mother saw me on the dragon she shrieked aloud for fear, but my father did all he could to console her.

" My fairy guardians had built a tower for my own use, with handsome rooms, luxurious furniture, and interesting books; but the rooms had no doors, every one being entered by the windows, which were terribly high up. On the top of the tower, however, there was a beautiful garden.

" The fairies brought me up very well, and always dressed me in beautiful clothes. They had me taught everything that a Princess of my age could learn, and always came on the dragon to visit me. I believed myself to be their own child. No one stayed with me in the tower, but I had a parrot and a lap-dog which kept me company, for they were endowed with reason and also with speech.

" One side of the tower looked over a road where I had never once seen anyone walking or driving, so I was immensely surprised one day, when, talking to my companions near the window, I looked out and saw a handsome young

knight, who seemed to have overheard our conversation. He made me a low bow; then, as night was falling, he departed, after having sounded his bugle to my great delight.

"Next morning I ran to my window, and was overjoyed to see him again. He had a speaking-trumpet which enabled me to hear all he said, but I dared not answer back for fear of being heard by the fairies; however, I threw him some flowers, for which he thanked me. Then he said:

"'If you are willing to let me come every morning at this hour to talk to you a little, please throw something down, and I shall know that you consent.' I took my turquoise ring from my finger and dropped it down to him, signing quickly to him to go away, as I heard the fairy called Violence coming with my breakfast. As soon as she dismounted from the dragon she exclaimed:

"'I smell a man's voice here! Search, dragon!'

"I trembled with fear.

"'Has a voice a smell, dear Madam? And

what mortal would dare to climb up here?' I asked.

"Violence made no answer, but when I had taken my breakfast she handed me my distaff, and said:

"'Having eaten, you must now get some work done. You did nothing at all yesterday.'

"As soon as she had gone, I threw down my distaff, and went up to the roof-garden. I had a very good field-glass, and in the distance I saw the young knight resting under a pavilion of cloth of gold. He was surrounded by a great train of followers. I feared that, if he returned to the tower, he might be discovered by the dragon, so I told my parrot to fly to him, tell him of his danger, and say I did not wish him to come back.

"The parrot delivered my message correctly, and the King (for such he was) gave her a message for me and entrusted her with a ring, which she carried in her claw, and a tiny portrait of himself, which he tied under her wing.

"I awaited the return of my little courier with great impatience. When she arrived, she

told me from the King that he was much too brave to give up his visits on account of the danger to himself, but that he would continue to come whenever there was a favourable opportunity. I began to weep, as I feared what the dragon might do, and to console me Poll gave me the ring, which was a very much handsomer one than the turquoise ring I had thrown down; then she lifted her wing, and I undid the string, and took the royal portrait, which I slipped inside my dress, and whenever I was very lonely I brought it out to gaze on it.

" With so many new thoughts, some pleasant, some sad, I began to feel restless and excited. The fairies imagined that I was weary of living alone, and they began to search for a husband for me, and they chose the dwarf King Migonnet, whose mind was as crooked as his body. His cruel disposition and violent temper made him dreaded by everyone near him. The parrot, who overheard them talking about it, came flying to me and said:

" ' Oh! how sorry I shall be for you, my dear mistress, if you have to marry that horrid

little Migonnet. The little monster terrifies me even to look at him ! I know him only too well, because I was reared on the same branch as he, for he has eagle's claws instead of feet ! '

" I was distracted with grief, and determined to die rather than marry Migonnet.

" In the morning my little dog, whose scent is very keen, told me that the King was at the bottom of the tower. I ran to the window, and through his trumpet he begged me to find some means of leaving the tower, or of letting him enter, as he wanted to marry me, and then I should be the greatest Queen in the world.

" I sent the parrot to tell him that what he asked was almost impossible, but that I would do my very best, if only he would not come daily, as the fairies would have no mercy.

" The King went away delighted, but I was terribly distressed, thinking of what I had promised to do. I could find no means of leaving the tower, and again I sent my parrot to tell him so, and he was ready to die with grief.

" My sadness increased daily and I wept the

greater part of my time. Fairy Violence noticed my red eyes. and told me that if I did not tell her why I wept so much, she would burn me. I told her that I was weary of spinning, and that I wanted little nets to catch the birds which were destroying the fruits in the garden. She brought me pieces of cord to make the nets, and at the same time she told me to dress to receive King Migonnet, who would arrive presently.

"As soon as she had gone I hastened to make a ladder of the cords, and I sent the parrot to tell the King that I wanted him to come to the tower that night and to stand just beneath my window. I fastened the ladder firmly to the iron bar of the window, and prepared to descend, but before I could get out the King had mounted it and come into the room. I was so delighted to see him that I forgot all about the danger. He asked me to marry him, and we took the parrot and the dog as witnesses. Never before were people of such high rank married with so little ceremony.

"I told the King of the marriage the fairies

had arranged for me with Migonnet, and I described his appearance, which horrified the King as much as it had done myself.

"It was night when he left, and shortly after his departure I saw, coming through the air, a fiery chariot drawn by winged salamanders and escorted by guards mounted on ostriches.

"A few minutes later Violence made her appearance in my room.

"'Your intended husband has arrived,' said she. 'Prepare to receive him.'

"'Who told you that I wanted a husband?' I cried. 'Send King Migonnet home. I shall never be his wife.'

"'Oh, indeed!' said the fairy. 'But you must understand, you little rebel, that I am in no mood for joking, and I shall——'

"'What will you do?' said I, in desperation. 'Can you make my life more miserable than it already is, shut up as I am in this tower, with only my parrot and my lap-dog?'

"'You are an ungrateful little wretch!' said Violence. Then she went off to report our quarrel to her sisters.

" Both my parrot and my lap-dog scolded me for being so impudent, and begged me to conciliate the fairies by meekness and patience; but I would not listen to them.

" My interview with Migonnet took place on the roof-garden. He was very short, his legs were without bones, his feet were like eagle's claws, and he had to walk on both his knees and his feet at the same time, supporting the weight of his heavy, shapeless body on crutches. His head was enormous, and his red nose was so big and thick that a dozen birds could sit on it. His beard was so bushy that several canaries made their nests in it, and his long ears stood half a yard above his head. The flame of his chariot roasted the apples as he passed, and dried up the water in my little garden. He came forward to kiss me, but I fled down to my room and shut both the door and the windows, and Migonnet returned to the fairies in great wrath.

" The fairies begged his pardon, and undertook to tie my feet and hands while I was asleep, and to put me in his fiery chariot, so that he

could fly away with me. They did not scold me, but behaved so kindly that both of my pets were suspicious and warned me to beware of them; but I paid no attention to the warnings. I put out the ladder for my husband, as I had done before. He came up and entered the room, closing the window behind him, and we began to talk happily together, when, all of a sudden, my windows were burst open. Through one came the fairies on their dragon, and through the other came Migonnet in his fiery chariot.

" My husband the King, forgetful of his own safety, drew his sword to protect me, but the dragon killed him with his breath and swallowed him up before my eyes. In utter despair I rushed forward to the monster's fearful mouth, hoping he would devour me, but the cruel fairies held me back, crying :

" ' No ! Death is too good for such a wretch ! '

" They touched me with their wand and I became a white cat. They brought me to this palace, and changed all the great lords and ladies of my father's kingdom into cats, except

those who were in office at the Court. These they rendered invisible, all but their hands.

"They told me all about my rank and the incidents connected with my birth; also that both my father and my mother were dead. Then they told me that I should not get rid of my feline shape till I found a Prince resembling my dead husband who would be willing to deliver me. You, my Prince, are the image of him, and my miseries are ended!"

White Puss, now a great Queen, seated herself in a magnificent chariot, our young Prince by her side, and they set out for the palace, where the brothers of the Prince were already waiting. As the chariot neared the palace the Queen hid herself in a piece of rock crystal.

When they arrived at the palace, the two elder Princes were walking in the palace grounds with two very beautiful Princesses whom they had brought to show to the King. They asked their brother what the lady he brought was like. He said he had seen no beauties, so he only brought a little white cat. At this they burst out laughing.

The King welcomed the two Princes and their Princesses, whom he thought so beautiful that he could not decide which one should have the prize. He looked at the youngest, and said :

" So you come alone this time ! "

" Your Majesty," replied the Prince, " will find in this piece of rock crystal a little white cat which mews so sweetly that I am sure it will please you."

The King advanced toward the lump of crystal, but at the same moment the Queen touched a spring inside it, the crystal fell apart, and she stepped out, like the sun from behind clouds, her golden hair hanging in long curls to her feet, and her white gauze robe girdled with flowers. At the sight, the King exclaimed with enthusiasm :

" This is she who has won the Crown ! "

" Sire," said the Queen, " I cannot deprive you of a throne which you occupy so worthily. I have six kingdoms of my own. Allow me to offer you one of them, and to give one each to your two elder sons. In exchange for these three kingdoms, I would ask for your friendship,

and for the hand of your youngest son as my husband."

The King bowed gracefully, while his courtiers cheered this speech to the echo.

The marriages of all three sons were celebrated at once with great pomp and amid general good-will; then the three couples set off, each to govern their own realm. As for the beautiful White Cat, she has been immortlized as much for her generous heart as for her learning and her beauty.

PRINCE DARLING

THERE was once a King who was so just and so kind that his people surnamed him "the Good." One day when he was out hunting, a little rabbit, fleeing from the hounds, jumped right into his arms. The King sheltered the little trembling creature under his coat, saying to himself: "It came to me for safety; I must protect it." He carried the rabbit home to the palace, got a pretty little rabbit-hutch made for it, and gave orders that it was to be well fed and attended to.

During the night, when he was alone, he was astonished to find a beautiful lady standing before him, and he felt puzzled to know how she had come, as the door of his room was closed. She was dressed very simply, having neither

gold nor silver embroidery, nor any jewels, but her soft robe was as white as snow, and her lovely hair was crowned with white roses, shedding a delicate perfume all around.

While the King looked in silent amazement, his fair visitor addressed him :

" I am Fairy Candour. I was in the wood when you were hunting and wished to find out for myself whether you are as kind-hearted as people say you are. I therefore assumed the form of a rabbit, and took refuge in your arms, for I know that those who have pity in their hearts for a dumb animal have even more for their brother man, and if you had not sheltered me I should have known you were a hypocrite.

" I have come to thank you for your protection, and to tell you that under all circumstances you can rely on me as a friend, and now you have only to ask what you wish ; if it is at all possible, I shall give it you."

" Madam," said the good King, " since you are a fairy, you know all that I wish. I have only one son, whom I love with all my heart, so

that people generally name him Prince Darling. If you wish to do me a kindness, promise me to be a good friend to my boy."

"With all my heart I promise you that," said the fairy. "I can make your son grow up either the handsomest prince in the world, or the richest, or the most powerful; choose which you would prefer him to be."

"I do not specially desire any of these great gifts for my son," said the King, "but I should greatly like him to be the best Prince ever known. Of what use would good looks, riches or great kingdoms be to him, if he were a bad man? You know as well as I that he could be miserable with all these advantages, and that goodness alone can ever bring happiness."

"You are quite right there," said Candour, "but even I cannot make your son a good man unless he himself wishes to be good, and will strive himself to be so. All that I can promise is to watch over him, to give him good advice, to point out his faults to him, and even to punish him if he does not try to correct himself of them and learn to deny himself."

The good King was quite pleased with the fairy's promise. He did not live long after, but he died quite happy, knowing that his son had such a good kind friend as Fairy Candour.

Prince Darling was inconsolable. He loved his father dearly, and would willingly have given all he possessed to save his life, had that been possible.

Two days after the death of the good King, when Prince Darling had gone to bed, Candour suddenly appeared to him.

"I promised your father," said she, "to be a good friend to you, and in order to keep my word I have come to make you a present."

At the same time she put a small gold ring on his finger, saying to him:

"Take good care of this ring; it is much more precious than diamonds. Every time you do anything wrong, it will prick your finger, but if in spite of the prick you continue the wrong action, you will lose my friendship and make me your enemy."

When she finished this speech, she dis-

appeared, leaving Prince Darling greatly astonished.

For a considerable time the Prince behaved so well that the ring never once needed to prick him, and he was so well pleased with himself that he was always smiling. This made people add ' Happy ' to his name ' Darling.'

Some months later the young Prince went hunting, but came back without having caught anything. This annoyed him and put him in a bad humour. He imagined, for a moment, that the ring pressed him a little, but as it did not actually prick him he hardly noticed it. As he entered his room, his little dog Flora came jumping to welcome him, wanting to lick his hand.

" Get out of my way," said he crossly. " I can't be bothered with you just now."

The little creature did not understand, but tugged at his coat to draw his attention. In his ill-temper the Prince lifted his foot and kicked her out of his way. The ring pricked him sharply, as if it had been a pin. This made him think of his conduct, and feeling both annoyed

and ashamed, he sat down sulkily in the darkest corner of the room. It was a new and a disagreeable experience for him to be found fault with. He said to himself:

"Really, my fairy friend is making a fool of me! What wrong is there in giving a kick to an animal that is pestering me? What is the use of being master of a great empire, when I am not at liberty to beat my dog if I like?"

"I am not making a fool of you," said a voice, replying to the Prince's thoughts. "You have committed three faults instead of one. You let yourself get cross because you did not have what you wanted, and because you think both men and animals are made only for your pleasure. You flew into a passion, which is very wrong, and in your passion you were cruel to a little animal that had done nothing to deserve such treatment. I know that you are greatly the superior of a dog, but if it is to be accepted that the great and powerful can tyrannize over those who are beneath them, I might either flog you or kill you, as a fairy is vastly more powerful than a man. The real advantage of being

master over a great empire does not consist in having power to do all the wrong you care to do, but the power to do all the good you can."

Prince Darling saw his fault, and felt sorry for a little while. He promised to try to correct his own bad temper, but he soon forgot. Unfortunately his mother had died when he was very little, and he had been brought up by a very foolish old nurse, who let him have his own way in everything. When he wanted anything he had only to cry or fly into a passion, stamping his feet or yelling at the top of his voice. The stupid woman gave him what he wanted to pacify him, and it made him very obstinate and self-willed. She told him daily that soon he would be a great King, and that all Kings were happy because they could get everything they wanted, as everyone had to obey them and respect them, and no one could prevent a King from doing what he liked.

When he grew big enough to understand, he quite recognized how wrong these ideas were, and he saw that nothing was so ignoble as pride, vanity, and obstinacy. He really made many

efforts to correct himself, but these bad habits had become almost part of his nature, and nothing is so difficult to cure as a bad habit learned when young. His heart was not naturally bad or cruel, and sometimes he shed tears as he said to himself:

"I am very unfortunate. I have to fight my own pride and my own temper every day, and yet they get the better of me. If I had been corrected when I was young, it would have been better for me to-day."

His ring pricked him many a time. Sometimes he attended to the warning at once, sometimes he paid no heed, but continued his wrong course. The strange thing was that for a slight fault the ring gave a very tiny prick, but for a grave fault it pricked firmly till the finger bled. At last he lost patience, and making up his mind to do as he liked without restraint, he drew off the ring and threw it away.

He felt greatly relieved when he had no more pricking to worry him, and believed himself to be enjoying life for the first time. He spent his whole time in idle amusements, and even in

wrongdoing from which he would have shrunk when younger, and at last he behaved so badly that no nice people liked to be in his company.

One day when the Prince was out for an airing he saw a girl who was so beautiful that he determined to marry her. Her name was Zelia, and she was as well-behaved as she was good-looking, but she was of very humble birth.

The Prince thought Zelia would be only too glad to marry him and become a real Queen, so he asked her at once to be his wife, but the young girl answered him with great frankness :

" Sire, I am only a peasant girl, without fortune, but though I had a fortune I would not marry you."

" Am I so displeasing to look at ? " asked he, a little hurt.

" No, Sire," replied Zelia ; " you appear to me just what you are, a very handsome man. But of what use would your good looks, your wealth, or the fine clothes and grand coaches you promise, be to me, if your daily behaviour forced me to despise you and hate you ? "

The Prince was very angry at this plain

speaking, and ordered his officers to take Zelia by force to the palace. The young girl's contempt for him rankled in his mind all day, but he was so much in love with her that he could not bring himself to ill-treat her.

Among the favourites of Prince Darling was a foster-brother, who shared all his secrets. He was a bad man, brought up among people of low tastes. He kept himself in the Prince's favour by flattering him and encouraging his evil habits. As he saw that the Prince looked sad, he asked him the cause. The Prince told him that he was hurt by the contempt Zelia had shown him, for he knew he had deserved it, and he had just made up his mind to change his manner of living, as he felt he could never win Zelia's love unless he became a good man.

"You would change your ways because of the opinion of a country girl! You are surely very kind!" sneered the foster-brother. "If I were in your place, I should soon teach her her proper place. Have you forgotten what is due to your rank as King, and how humiliating it would be for you to be ruled by the opinions of a

mere peasant who ought to be proud to be one of your slaves? Shut her up. Give her nothing but bread and water, and if that does not bring her to her senses, torture her to death, as a lesson to everyone who disobeys you. You would be disgraced for ever if people thought a girl could resist you, and your subjects would forget that they only exist for your pleasure."

"But," replied the Prince, "should I not be still more disgraced if I were to cause the death of an innocent girl? For, after all, Zelia has done nothing wrong."

"No one is innocent who refuses to do your bidding," said this false man; "but it would be better for you to be accused of injustice than to be looked on as a contemptible weakling whom your subjects may despise or contradict when they like."

The flatterer had touched the Prince on his weakest side, for he was vain and proud of his power, so the fear of losing his authority made him listen to this bad advice and stifle his desire to be a better man.

The foster-brother saw that he had shaken the Prince's resolution, and in order to follow up the advantage he had gained, he got three of the worst of the Prince's bad companions to come to sup with him that evening. They put a drug in the Prince's wine, knowing that it would madden him; then they twitted him with being under the thumb of an ignorant country-girl, who could snap her fingers at him when she chose.

The Prince, no longer master of himself, rose and swore he would be revenged; then, with his drunken companions, he staggered off toward Zelia's room, of which he had the key. He unlocked the door, and with derisive oaths they all reeled in, to find the room empty!—Zelia was not there!

The Prince's anger knew no bounds. He vowed that he would severely punish anyone who could even be suspected of having helped Zelia to escape. His companions, hearing what he said, determined to seize the opportunity to ruin Suliman, the Prince's former tutor, whom they hated and feared because he was good and

just, and had tried to persuade the Prince to give up his bad habits.

Suliman loved the Prince sincerely, and at first Darling had taken his advice, but latterly he had resented it, and banished the good tutor from the Court.

The Prince, nevertheless, respected Suliman in his heart, and was often heard to speak of him as a good, just man, though he did not wish his interference, and would not have him near the palace.

The bad companions had always feared that Darling might change his mind and recall Suliman, so they now invented a story to the effect that some people had heard Suliman boast that he would let Zelia out of the room where she was imprisoned. This story they told to the Prince, who at first could hardly believe it, but they bribed three other bad men to swear they had heard Suliman say so. On hearing this, the Prince was beside himself with rage, and ordered his foster-brother to send soldiers to bring Suliman to the palace in chains like a criminal.

After giving this order, Prince Darling retired to his room to brood over his loss.

As he entered, a terrible peal of thunder shook the palace to its foundations, and he felt the ground trembling beneath him; then the Fairy Candour appeared. In a severe voice she said:

"I promised your father to give you good advice, and to chastise you if you refused to follow it. You have chosen to despise my warnings and to act contrary to my advice. As a consequence you have destroyed your manhood, and have nothing left but the outward form of a man. Your evil deeds have changed you into a monster, abhorred by both heaven and earth. It is time for me to fulfil my promise by meting out your punishment. I shall now take from you even the semblance of a man, and you shall become like the beasts whose habits you have acquired. You have been like a lion in fury, a wolf in greed, a serpent in ingratitude, and a bull in brutality. In your new form I condemn you to bear a resemblance to all these animals."

Candour had hardly finished speaking when the Prince found, with horror, that he had taken the form she described. He had the head of a lion, the horns of a bull, the legs of a wolf, and the tail of a serpent. He found himself in a great forest, beside a clear stream in which he saw the reflection of his horrible appearance, and he heard a voice from above him saying :

" Look at yourself and consider carefully the state to which your vices have brought you ; then remember that your soul is a thousand times more frightful than your body."

Darling recognized the voice of Candour, and in a burst of fury he turned to rush at her and devour her, but no one was to be seen, and the voice continued :

" Your rage and your evil intentions are powerless to disturb me. Your pride needs still to be humbled, so I am going to put you under the power of your own subjects."

Darling turned from the fountain which showed him his horrible form so plainly, and thought he would hide himself in the wood, but he fell into a hole which had been dug to trap

bears. Some hunters who were hiding in the branches of a tree came down, and, having chained him, led him to his own capital city. On the way, instead of being sorry for the conduct which had brought him to such a pass, he cursed the fairy in his heart, bit his chains, and gave himself over to fury.

As he and his captors neared the city they noticed that some great event was being celebrated. The hunters asked some passers-by what it meant. They replied :

" The people are rejoicing because Prince Darling, who treated his subjects so badly, has been killed in his room by a thunderbolt." For such was the popular belief. " The gods," they added, " could no longer endure his crimes and his wickedness, so they have rid the earth of him. Four great lords, who were his companions in vice, made an attempt to seize the throne and share the kingdom between them, but the people, knowing that it was they who had ruined their King, set upon them and killed them. The good lord Suliman, whom the Prince had condemned to death, has been crowned King, and the event

is being celebrated as a National Deliverance, for Suliman is a good man, and will restore peace and plenty to our country."

Darling felt ready to burst with rage when he heard all this, but he had a greater trial to face when they arrived at the great square in front of the palace, where, on a superb throne, sat Suliman, surrounded by crowds who shouted loudly :

" Long live King Suliman ! May he have many years of happiness to enable him to repair the evil wrought by his predecessor ! "

Suliman stood up and made a sign with his hand to the noisy multitude, who immediately disposed themselves to listen in silent respect. Then he said :

" I accept the Crown you offer me for the time being, but I do so to preserve it for your rightful King, my former pupil, Prince Darling. He is not dead, as you suppose. A fairy has told me this, and perhaps you and I may yet have the pleasure of seeing him turn from his evil ways and become again the good, kind man that nature intended him to be. Alas ! he was

led astray by flatterers. I knew him well, and his heart was good. He would have been a father to his subjects had it not been for those who were around him, who poisoned his mind with evil thoughts and set him a bad example. You and I must hate his vices, but we must be sorry for him and pray that he may repent of his wrongdoing, and may be restored to his right mind. For myself I should be only too happy if, by shedding my blood, I could see him again on the throne, with the good character and good desires which would enable him to reign worthily."

This speech cut Darling to the heart. He saw clearly how sincere and how faithful this good man's friendship had been, and, for the first time, he saw clearly how wicked his own conduct had been, and blamed himself for the misfortune that had come upon him. As soon as this better mood began, his fury was calmed, and he began to reflect on the many wrong things he had done. His shame was great, and he confessed to himself that he had deserved an even greater punishment than had been laid

on him. He ceased struggling to get out of the iron cage in which he was now chained, and became as quiet as a lamb. His captors took him to a great building where all the wild animals and monstrous creatures were kept, and they chained him in one of the compartments.

Darling resolved to begin to mend his ways at once, and his first step in the right direction was taken when he became quite docile and obedient to his keeper. The man was a brutal bully who beat the creatures under his care without rhyme or reason whenever he was in a bad temper, and Darling's gentleness did not save him from many a cruel blow. One day, when the fellow had fallen asleep, a tiger broke its chain and sprang on him to tear him to pieces. For a moment Darling was tempted to rejoice that the tiger was going to rid him of his persecutor, but next moment a feeling of pity for the unfortunate wretch made him wish he could free himself to go to his assistance—he wished to render good for evil, by saving the keeper's life.

Just as the desire arose, Darling found his cage was open. He flew to the assistance of the

man who was struggling to defend himself against the tiger. The wretched man thought his last hour had come when this other monster bounded toward him, but his fear was changed to joy when he saw it strangle the tiger and then come to lie down at his own feet. The man was filled with gratitude, and was bending over to pat the head of the monster which had saved his life, when he heard a voice saying :

" No good action goes without its reward."

At the same time he found there was no monster to be caressed, but in its stead a very handsome little dog, which licked the hand stretched out to pat him.

Darling was delighted with this new change of form, and gambolled joyfully round the keeper, who lifted the dog in his arms and carried him to the King, to whom he told the wonderful story.

The Queen was so delighted with the beautiful dog that she kept it as a pet, and it accompanied her everywhere, carried on a silk cushion by her favourite page. Darling might have thought himself very fortunate if he could only

have forgotten that he ought not to be a dog, but that he should be a man and a king !

The Queen, who fondled him, often began to fear that he would grow too fat, so she consulted the most learned doctors of the Court on this subject. These gentlemen produced weighty books and ancient parchments to prove that dogs thrive best on a spare diet of bread and water, and as the Queen followed this advice rather too strictly, poor Darling felt ready to die of hunger the half of his time, but he told himself he must learn to be patient.

One morning, when he got his little roll of bread for his breakfast, he carried it in his mouth to the garden of the palace to eat it near a brook which he remembered.

The brook was no longer there, but in his search for it he came to a great house whose walls sparkled with gold and precious stones. Crowds of magnificently dressed men and women were going into it, and they all appeared to be gay, for there were sounds of music and dancing coming from all the brightly lighted windows ; but what seemed strange indeed was

that those who came out from it were thin, pale, and covered with hideous-looking boils and sores, while they had only a few filthy rags to cover themselves with. Some, indeed, fell dead on the threshold as they came out, having no strength to crawl farther. Some went a little way, then lay down to die of hunger, begging for a crust of bread from the gay crowds who were flocking to the house, but none in these crowds even looked at them as they passed.

Darling saw a young girl trying to pull up some grass to eat to satisfy her hunger. He went toward her, saying to himself:

"I am hungry, but I am not dying of hunger. I can wait till dinner-time, and perhaps my roll will save this girl's life."

He held out the roll to her. She snatched it from him and ate it greedily. It seemed to renew her strength, and Darling, delighted to have been in time to save her, turned and began to walk back toward the palace.

On the way he heard a woman's voice calling for help. It seemed to be Zelia, who was being dragged by four men who wanted to force her

to go into the brightly lighted house. At that moment Darling regretted having lost his monster form, for he thought it would have enabled him to terrify these bad men.

"What can a poor little dog do to help her?" he asked himself in great distress; but he did his best by barking and trying to bite the heels of the girl's captors. They kicked him out of their way, but he returned to the attack repeatedly, till one kick seemed to blind him for a while, and he lost sight of them.

His heart was torn with remorse as he told himself that, but for his own wickedness in imprisoning Zelia, she would not have been in the hands of these bad men.

Suddenly Darling heard the sound of a window opening, and his joy was great when he saw a maiden, who resembled Zelia, throw him a plateful of good roast beef and close the casement quickly. As Darling was very hungry he bounded forward to take some of the meat, when the girl to whom he had given his roll that morning came up and called him to her. Lifting him in her arms, she said:

"Poor little animal, you must not touch any food coming from that house. It is poisoned and would kill you. That is the palace of the terrible fairy Self-Indulgence, who poisons everyone who enters her domains."

Then Darling heard a voice saying, as before: "No good action goes without its reward," and at the same moment he found himself changed into a beautiful white dove. He remembered that white was the favourite colour of Candour, and he began to hope that in the end she would restore him to his original form.

His first desire was to find out what had become of Zelia, so he spread his wings and flew all round the house. Seeing an open window, he flew in and looked everywhere; but Zelia was not there. He was terribly grieved, but determined to fly to the end of the earth, if necessary, in order to find her. He sped on for several days without stopping, until, when crossing a desert, he noticed the mouth of a cave. Flying low, he entered this cave, where to his great delight he found Zelia sitting beside a hermit and sharing his frugal meal of

ripe fruit. Darling perched on her shoulder and rubbed his soft head against her neck and face, cooing all the time to show her how pleased he was.

Zelia was charmed with the gentle little dove, and stroked its soft feathers with her hand. At the same time she spoke to it, though she did not know that it could understand her words. She told it that she accepted the gift of itself, which it had made to her, and that she would love and cherish it as long as she lived.

"What have you done, Zelia?" said the hermit. "Do you know that you have just plighted your troth?"

"Yes, my dear girl," said Prince Darling, who at that moment regained the power of speech, "the spell of my enchantment cannot be broken till you say you are willing to marry me. You have just promised me to love me always. I ask you to assure my happiness by consenting to our union, and I shall beg Fairy Candour, my protectress, to give me back the form which was mine when I was fortunate enough to hear you say my appearance pleased you."

The Prince had barely uttered these words when his own proper shape was restored.

"You need not fear that Zelia will be fickle," said Candour, throwing off the hermit's form in which she had disguised herself. "Zelia loved you whenever she saw you, but she knew that your character did not correspond with your appearance, and although only a poor girl she was too well brought up to marry a bad man. Your better nature has now reasserted itself, and she sees you now as Nature intended you to be, a good man as well as a good-looking one. On that sure foundation your marriage will be happy."

Both Zelia and Prince Darling threw themselves at the fairy's feet, to thank her for her protecting kindness, and for the punishment that had brought the Prince to his senses. Zelia joyfully gave her promise, and Fairy Candour herself married them there and then, while they knelt at her feet. She finished by saying:

"Rise up, my children. I shall now take you to the palace, that Prince Darling may ascend the throne of which he is now worthy."

When Candour finished speaking Prince Darling and Princess Zelia found themselves in the throne-room in the presence of Suliman. This good man himself rose and seated the Prince on his father's throne, and crowned him King; he then was the first of Darling's faithful subjects to kneel and swear loyalty to him.

Darling and Zelia reigned long and happily, and the young King never again needed to be reminded of ill-doing by the pricking of the fairy's ring.

GOLDENLOCKS

ONCE there was a King whose only daughter was so beautiful that there was no one in the world fit to compare with her. Her exquisitely graceful figure and lovely face were set off by a glory of golden hair such as no one had ever seen. It was finer than the finest silk, and so abundant and so long that it fell in shining, rippling curls to her very feet. She crowned it daily with a garland of flowers, and let it fall over her graceful shoulders and rich robes like a mantle. Because of her marvellous hair she was known everywhere by the name of Goldenlocks, and her beauty was such that no one could see her without loving her.

Among the neighbouring sovereigns was a young King, who was very rich. This monarch

heard so often of the beautiful Princess with the golden locks, that although they had not met, he fell violently in love with her; he let his imagination dwell on her to such an extent that at last he could neither eat nor sleep, and he resolved to send an ambassador to ask her hand in marriage. He got a splendid State coach made, and sent a hundred superbly caparisoned horses and a hundred riders in gold and scarlet liveries with the ambassador, as an escort for the Princess. He never doubted that she would accept his proposal gladly.

After the escort had started, the Court could talk of nothing but the approaching marriage, and preparations for celebrating it were begun. The rooms to be occupied by the bride were newly furnished in the richest and most fashionable manner, and new dresses for every day of the year, of the most costly velvets, satins, or brocades, embroidered with diamonds, pearls, and emeralds, were ordered by the King to be made, and to be ready for the bride's use when she should arrive.

After travelling many days the ambassador

arrived at the palace of Goldenlocks, and was granted an immediate audience.

He delivered his message and laid out before the Princess the costly jewels which his master had sent for her acceptance. What was his surprise, as well as his disappointment, when Goldenlocks told him to thank the King, his master, for the honour he did her in asking her to be his wife, but to tell him that she had no intention of marrying anyone at that time! Of course she could not accept the valuable presents sent, since she was not willing to marry the sender, but to show that she did not wish to be ungracious, she kept a pretty little box of fine English pins—articles which could not be obtained in her own country.

The ambassador took his leave and set off with a sad heart to return to the Court of his own King, where he was awaited with impatience. When he arrived with no golden-haired beauty in the coach there was great lamentation, and the disappointed young King was quite inconsolable.

Among the lords of the Court was a youth

named Avenant, who was of quite extraordinary beauty. His elegant figure and frank, handsome face, together with his winning charm of manner, were so pleasing that people said it was like the rising sun, which brightens all around it. Everyone loved him, except two or three envious people, such as are to be found everywhere, who hated the youth because the King regarded him with special favour.

Avenant was one day standing near a group of courtiers who were criticizing the ambassador because of his failure to bring Goldenlocks back with him.

"He had not used much eloquence, I think!" said one of them.

"I agree with you," said Avenant carelessly. "If the King had given me the mission I feel sure the Princess would have come back with me!"

Some of these men were wicked enough to repeat these words to the King in such a way as to make his Majesty think that Avenant had boasted that his own personal attractions were so great that the Princess would have followed

him anywhere, and that she would have fallen in love with him even in preference to his Majesty.

"Only think of his presumption!" said they. "To think that he would have succeeded where your Majesty has failed!" This made the King furious:

"Ha!" said he, "this pretty pet of mine makes game of my misfortune, does he? He makes himself of more importance than I am! We shall see! Throw him into the dungeon and let him die of hunger!"

The guards went to find Avenant, who by this time had quite forgotten his thoughtless words. They dragged him to a tower and heaped insults on him, handling him roughly on the way. They left him in the dark dungeon without food, and with only a little straw on which he could lie down. After a time he was ready to die of hunger, and suffered from such thirst that he must have died had not a glimmer of light from the slit high up in the wall fallen for a moment on some water which was oozing through the ground at one side of the dungeon.

He lay down on the ground and cooled his lips in the tiny stream, sucking in the fresh water as it rose. Feeling somewhat refreshed, he began to reflect upon his hard fate.

"How have I offended the King?" he asked himself in piteous tones. "He had no more loyal subject or more faithful friend. I would willingly have died for him!"

These words he repeated again and again, though the walls could give him no answer.

After some days, the King, who felt lonely without his friend, and who may have begun to feel some remorse, went for his morning walk along a path which passed close by the tower. Hearing the pitiful sound, he recognized Avenant's voice, though it was weak and tremulous, and he stopped to listen, in spite of the attempts of his courtiers to lead him away.

"Surely, Sire," said they, "you are not going to amuse yourself by listening to that wretch!"

"Have done!" replied the King. "It is my will to listen!"

Soon he made out every word of the poor

youth's lament, and the tears rushed down his cheeks. He ordered the warden to open the door of the tower, and he himself called Avenant by name.

Avenant, who could hardly stand, groped his way along the wall toward the door, not knowing what fate might have in store for him. At the door he fell on his knees and kissed the King's feet, while he sobbed :

" Wherein have I offended your Majesty, that I should be so cruelly punished ? "

" You made game of me and my ambassador," replied the King. " You said that if I had sent you for the Princess Goldenlocks, you could easily have brought her back with you."

" That is quite true," said Avenant. " I, who know you so well, could have told her of all your good qualities, and I should have described you so eloquently that she could not have helped wanting to come with me ; but what was there in that to displease you, Sire ? "

The King saw that he had judged the young man wrongly, and he looked angrily at those who had deceived him. He led Avenant to the

palace, telling him as they went how deeply he regretted having punished him so unjustly, and after bidding the servants bring refreshments, told him to rest till supper, after which they would have a little private talk together.

As Avenant was young and healthy, the good food and refreshing wine soon restored his strength, and having nothing now to sadden him he recovered his lightness of heart.

In due time he partook, also, of the grand supper prepared for him, and at its close the King summoned him to his private apartment. After a few minutes' conversation :

" Avenant," said the King, " I am still deeply in love with the Princess Goldenlocks. Her refusal has not completely discouraged me, but I find it difficult to see how I can induce her to consent to marry me. I should like to send you to see if you could not succeed."

" I ask for nothing better, Sire," replied Avenant. " I shall set off to-morrow, if you wish it."

" That is too soon," said the King, " for I must give you a fitting escort."

"No escort is necessary," said Avenant. "All I need is a good horse and your Majesty's letters of introduction."

The King, delighted to find the youth so ready to serve him, threw his arms round him and kissed him fondly.

Next morning the finest horse in the royal stables was led to the door of the palace, and Avenant, bearing the King's letters, mounted and rode off on his mission, followed by the admiring eyes of all in the royal household.

During the whole of the long journey Avenant thought of nothing but how he could best plead the King's cause.

When his horse needed rest to and drink, he would choose a shady part of some wood near the banks of a stream, and while his horse rested he sat on the grass and prepared the speech which he would make to the Princess.

One day, while he was thus engaged, a golden carp, chasing an insect, overleapt itself, and fell on the bank near him. It was early morning, for he always started at break of day, and the fine fish would have made him a good breakfast,

but Avenant only saw the agony of the beautiful fish struggling for its life. He rose from the grass and, lifting the carp, dropped it gently into the water. As soon as it felt itself in the fresh cool stream again, it revived and sped like a flash to the deepest part, below the overhanging turf, but it rose again so near the surface that Avenant could see it, and to his astonishment he heard it say :

" Avenant, I thank you for what you have done for me. I shall reward you."

Continuing his journey the next day Avenant saw a raven pursued by an eagle, which would have torn it to pieces had not Avenant come to its rescue.

" How the strong oppress the weak ! " thought he, and, taking an arrow from his quiver, he drew his bow and shot the eagle a moment before it could seize its prey. The eagle fell to the ground dead, and the raven, delighted to find itself alive and unhurt, came and perched on the branch of a tree quite near.

" Avenant," said he, " you are very kind to have taken the trouble to help me, who am only

a poor raven, and I shall not forget your kindness. One day I may be able to reward you."

Avenant again marvelled at this strange happening, and continued his journey. One day he started so early to avoid too much travelling in the heat of the day that he could hardly see his way through a wood he had to cross. Quite near him he heard the despairing shriek of an owl.

" There's a poor owl in a bad plight ! " said he to himself. " I should not be surprised if it is in the meshes of some hunter's net." He groped about on one side and another, trying to follow the sound, and came upon some nets spread on the ground in which the unfortunate owl had got snared.

" What a pity it is, " thought he, " that men seem to take so much pleasure in tormenting each other and in persecuting the dumb creatures that do them no harm ! "

He took out his knife and cut the meshes that held the owl, and, finding itself set free, the bird swiftly flew up, but made a downward swoop toward its benefactor to say :

" Avenant, it needs not a long speech to make you understand how much I am obliged to you. I have a grateful heart. I shall reward you."

These were the three principal adventures of Avenant's journey, for he was in such a hurry to get to the end of it that he wasted no time.

When he arrived at the palace of Princess Goldenlocks, he found that it surpassed in splendour everything he had imagined.

Having removed the traces of his journey, Avenant combed and powdered his hair, as was the fashion of that day. He wore his Court attire of scarlet and gold, the velvet cap adorned with scarlet and white plumes. His splendidly embroidered cape was thrown carelessly over his shoulder, and his shoes glistened with diamond buckles. Thus arrayed he took a dainty basket in which was a lovely little dog which he had brought to offer to the Princess, and presented himself at the gate of the palace. He was so handsome and so gracious in manner and speech that the guards bowed low before him. He told them his name and his errand,

then gave the letters of introduction to be taken to the Princess.

The lords-in-waiting hurried to tell Goldenlocks that Avenant had come from the great King who was her nearest neighbour.

"Avenant!" said Goldenlocks. "That is a pleasant name, and I doubt not its bearer is handsome and pleasing to look upon."

"Indeed he is!" said the maids-of-honour. "We saw him from the garret, where we were getting flax for our spinning, and so long as he stood under the windows we could do nothing but look at him!"

"That is a nice story, indeed!" said the Princess. "You amuse yourselves watching young gentlemen! Come! Make haste to dress me. Bring my blue satin pearl-embroidered gown, comb out my golden curls, weave a wreath of fresh flowers for my hair, and give me my fan and my high-heeled shoes."

The ladies ran in haste to do her bidding; they dressed her like a Queen, and she went into the great gallery of mirrors, to view herself from every side, and to make sure that no part of

her toilet had been neglected. Having satisfied herself on that point, she went to the audience-chamber and seated herself on her magnificent throne of ivory, ebony, and gold.

She commanded her maidens to take their musical instruments, seat themselves at a convenient distance, and sing softly to low sweet accompaniments, so that the music should not interfere with the conversation she held with her guest.

When Avenant was brought into the throne-room and saw the Princess, he was struck dumb with admiration, and his well-prepared speech went almost out of his memory. For a few moments he had not a word to say. Nevertheless he took courage, and having begun to deliver his master's message and to plead for him, his eloquence increased at every sentence. He finished by entreating the Princess not to give him the pain of returning to his master without her.

"Dear Avenant," said the Princess, "you plead well, and all your arguments are good. You have so favourably impressed me that I

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am inclined to your petition more than to that of any other who has ever come to me. I cannot, however, go with you at once, for this reason: While I was walking by the river a month ago I took off my glove, and in doing so I drew from my finger a very precious ring which, unfortunately, fell into the stream. That ring I prized more than my father's kingdom, and my grief for its loss is inexpressible. I have made a vow that I shall listen to no proposal of marriage unless he who comes as ambassador can find this ring and bring it to me. Perchance you may recover it; otherwise your pleading is useless."

Avenant was much astonished at this reply, but he made the Princess a courtly bow, and, before retiring, begged her acceptance of the little dog and a magnificent scarf. But the Princess said she wanted no presents; she hoped he would pay attention to what she had said to him.

When Avenant was conducted to the house where he was to lodge he went to bed without supper. Frisky, his little dog, also refused to eat, and lay down on the bed beside him. The

whole night long Avenant lay awake sighing. "What hope is there of finding a ring lost in a great river a month ago?" said he. "It would be folly to try. The Princess has set me an impossible task in order to get rid of me."

Frisky, who saw his grief, was as much distressed as his master, but he tried his best to comfort him.

"My dear master," said he, "I beg of you not to give up hope of succeeding. When daylight comes, let us go to the riverside; it can do no harm to look for the ring."

Avenant patted him gently without speaking, and worn out with the emotions of the day, he fell sound asleep.

At the first streak of dawn the little dog jumped off the bed, and frisked about to such good purpose that he awakened his master.

Avenant dressed and went down to the garden, hardly caring what he did. From the garden he strolled toward the river, unconsciously following the lead of the little dog. He walked slowly, his cap drawn over his eyes and his arms crossed on his bosom. He was too sad to take notice

of the beautiful dawn, and brooded over his return, when he would have to tell the King of his failure.

Suddenly he heard a voice calling him by name :

" Avenant ! Avenant ! "

He looked around, but no one was to be seen, and he thought he must have been dreaming, so he continued his walk.

" Avenant ! Avenant ! " called the voice again.

" Who calls me ? " cried Avenant.

Frisky, being so small, could look easily into the clear water.

" Never believe me again," said he, " if it is not this golden carp which I see."

Avenant stepped quickly to the side of the river, and the carp addressed him :

" You saved my life when I lay gasping in the meadow by the willows, where, but for you, I must have died. I promised you to repay your kindness. Stretch out your hand, dear Avenant ; here is the ring dropped in the river by the Golden-haired Beauty."

The carp opened its mouth ; Avenant stooped down and took from it the much-wished-for ring. Then he thanked his friend many times over.

Instead of going back to his lodging, Avenant went straight to the palace, followed by the faithful little Frisky, who was mightily pleased with himself.

At the palace, Avenant again asked for an audience with the Princess, and an attendant went at once to announce him.

" Poor boy," said she, " he has no doubt come to say good-bye. He has evidently seen that I have asked him to do the impossible, and he is returning to tell his master."

Avenant was ushered in, and gracefully presented the ring to the Princess, saying :

" Madam, your royal command is obeyed. May I ask if you are willing now to take the King, my master, for your husband ? "

When Goldenlocks saw the ring restored to her without a flaw, she was mute with astonishment, and seemed for a few moments to be in a dream ; then she said :

' Really, my Avenant, some fairy must have

taken a fancy for you; you have performed what seems a miracle."

"Madam," replied Avenant, "I am not acquainted with any fairy, but I had an ardent desire to give you pleasure."

"Since you are so well disposed toward me," said the Princess, "you must render me another service; until it is done, I shall not marry. There is a Prince not far from here named Galifron, who has taken it into his head to force me to marry him. He threatens to destroy my country should I refuse. He is a giant of enormous strength, higher than that high tower, and he can seize and eat a man as easily as a monkey can eat a chestnut. I sent him word that I did not want to marry, and begged him to excuse me, but he has not ceased to persecute me. He kills my subjects whenever he gets a chance, so the greatest service you can render me is to bring me his head."

Avenant was rather stupefied by the proposal. He thought it over for a minute, however; then, drawing his slight figure up to its full height, he replied bravely:

"Madam, I shall fight Galifron. I am sure to be vanquished, but at least I shall die a faithful servant and an honourable gentleman."

The Princess was painfully surprised. She had not expected such daring courage, and now did all she could to dissuade Avenant from undertaking so perilous an enterprise, but in vain. He went at once to choose his weapons and provide himself with all he should be likely to need. Then, being equipped with everything necessary, he put Frisky again in his basket, which he fastened to his saddle-bow, and mounting his charger set out to find Galifron.

Whenever he met anyone likely to be able to give him information, he made inquiry about the whereabouts and the habits of the giant. Everyone spoke of him as a demon of cruelty, whom no one dared approach, and the more Avenant heard of him, the more he dreaded the task he had undertaken. Frisky saw his master's anxiety, and did all he could to cheer and encourage him.

"My dear master, while you are fighting the giant, I shall run and bite his legs," said he;

" he will have to stoop down to drive me away ; then you will be able to cut off his head."

Avenant admired his little dog's clever device, but he knew that something more than that would be needed to make him a match for his terrible opponent.

As he neared the giant's castle our hero's courage was tested to the utmost, for on every hand were strewn the remains of the monster's cannibal feasts.

Soon Galifron himself appeared in the distance, striding through the forest, head and shoulders higher than the tallest trees. The earth began to shake, and a voice more frightful than rolling thunder filled the air. It was the giant, singing as he came :

" Where are the pretty babes ?
Bring them to me.
Be their skin dark or fair,
Welcome they'll be.
Bring them all, big or small,
Tender or tough ;
Though you bring all you find,
'Tis not enough ! "

Immediately Avenant took up the same tune and sang:

"Proud Galifron, take care!
I'll draw your teeth!
I'll lay you low ere I
My good sword sheath!
Although I am not big
My heart is strong;
At last you've met your match,
Who do such wrong."

When Galifron first heard the clear, tremulous voice, he looked around him in amazement, and now as the slender youth who, sword in hand, dared to defy him, came into view, he got into a fearful fury. He poised his massive iron-headed club, and would have pounded the brave youth to jelly, but for a raven, which at that very moment flew right in his face and picked out his eyes. The sightless giant hit out desperately on all sides. Foam flew from his great lips, and he yelled with rage. Avenant dodged the mighty blows, and pierced him in many places with his sword, twice over burying

it up to the hilt in the giant's flesh. At last the monster staggered and fell prone on the ground. Avenant sprang upon him, and with his sword severed the giant's head from his body. When the horrid head rolled off, Frisky danced and barked in frantic delight, while the raven, which had perched on a branch to watch the combat, flapped its wings and cawed approvingly; then it spoke:

"Avenant, I have not forgotten the service you rendered me when the eagle would have killed me. I promised you then that I would repay you. I think I have done so to-day."

"I owe my victory and my life to you, Sir Raven," replied Avenant, "and I shall ever feel myself your debtor."

Having thus thanked the raven, Avenant prepared to return to the palace of Goldenlocks. He tied the hideous head by its hair to the girth, put Frisky in his basket, remounted his charger, and did not draw rein till he reached the city. There, as the people saw him arrive with the head of Galifron, the noise was deafening, for the whole population followed him, shouting:

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Avenant has killed the giant!"

Goldenlocks heard the commotion and her heart sank. She did not dare to ask what it meant, lest she might hear that Avenant had been killed. Soon, however, she saw him ride into the courtyard with the terrible head, and the sight of it was so shocking that, although there was nothing now to fear, she trembled from head to foot. Soon Avenant was ushered into her presence. He bowed low, and said:

"Madam, your enemy is dead; I hope you will no longer refuse to marry the King, my master."

"Oh! indeed!" said the Princess. "But I will refuse him, unless you can bring me some water from the fairy fountain of the Dismal Cave. There is, not far from here, a great grotto which measures six leagues round its sides. Its entrance is guarded by fiery dragons, which spit flame at all intruders. In the dark centre of this grotto is a deep hollow, filled with all loathsome creeping things: snakes, toads, and serpents. At the bottom of this hollow is the

mouth of a small cave through which flows the fountain of beauty and health. Some of the water of that stream I must have. Its virtue is so marvellous that all who wash in it are for ever young and beautiful. You can easily understand, Avenant, that I cannot quit my country without taking some of this priceless water with me."

"Madam," said Avenant, "you are already so beautiful that you do not need this water, but I am an unfortunate ambassador, whose death you desire. I go to try to find what you ask, but I go knowing that I shall never return."

These touching words did not make the Princess change her resolution, and Avenant set out with Frisky to seek the Gloomy Grotto in which was the Dismal Cave, whence he was to bring the Water of Eternal Youth and Beauty.

All who met him on the way looked sadly after him, saying to each other: "How pitiful it is to see such a charming young man go so readily to his doom!"

Avenant rode steadily on, though sad at heart. He came at length to the top of a hill,

both steep and high, from which a good view of the surrounding country could be got. Here he dismounted to let his horse rest and graze, while Frisky ran about chasing the flies. He looked carefully around for traces of the Gloomy Grotto, as he knew it could not be far away, and soon perceived a massive rock, black as ink, from which belched great volumes of smoke. A puff of wind blew the clouds aside and revealed one of the dragons; fire issuing from its eyes, mouth, and nostrils, a fearful-looking creature! Its body was yellow and green, its feet were armed with long, cruel claws, and its great tail was twisted in a hundred coils. Frisky caught sight of it, and was petrified with terror.

Avenant, already prepared for death, drew his sword and descended the hill, taking with him a little phial given him by Goldenlocks to fill with the wonderful water.

"I am done for," said he to Frisky; "it is impossible to get the water guarded by such dragons, but I go to make the attempt. When I am dead, I want you, my faithful little friend, to fill this phial with my blood and take it to

the Princess, that she may see the price I have paid for trying to please her; then go to the King, my master, and tell him the story of my misfortunes."

He had hardly finished this mournful speech when he heard a voice calling :

" Avenant ! Avenant ! "

" Who is calling me ? " asked he, turning in the direction from which the voice had come. An owl, looking out of a hole in an old tree, replied :

" You released me from the fowler's net, and so saved my life. I promised you then that I should reward you, and my opportunity has come. Give me the phial. I know all the outs and ins of the Gloomy Grotto and the Dismal Cave. I will fetch you water from the Spring of Eternal Youth and Beauty ! "

Whose heart, think you, bounded with joy ? You can guess !

Avenant quickly handed over the phial, and the owl flew unhindered into the Gloomy Grotto. In less than a quarter of an hour he returned, bringing the phial well filled and

firmly corked. Avenant was delighted. He thanked the owl with all his heart, and was very soon on his way back to the city, in a more joyful mood than that in which he had left it.

When he arrived, he went straight to the palace, and presented the phial to the Princess, who had no longer excuse for not accompanying him. She ordered everything to be prepared for her departure, and soon they set off together. On the way, he was so respectful and attentive, and such pleasant company, that she often wished that he had been the King she was travelling to marry.

One day she said to him :

" If you had wished to marry me yourself, Avenant, I should have made you King, and we should not have needed to leave my country."

Avenant, however, replied at once :

" I would not have done anything so disloyal and unfaithful for all the kingdoms of the world, though I yield to no one in my admiration of your beauty."

Messengers had been sent with tidings that Avenant was bringing the Golden-haired Prin-

cess with him, so they were met outside the capital by the King, who made the Princess the grandest and most costly presents ever seen. The marriage took place amid great rejoicings. Everything was done with such magnificence that nothing else was talked of for a long time afterward.

But in spite of all her grandeur, Goldenlocks was not really happy. She had become so attached to Avenant that he was never out of her thoughts, and she was never weary of talking about him and the great deeds he had done for her.

" But for Avenant, I should never have been here," said she to the King. " He performed seemingly impossible feats for my pleasure. You are under great obligation to him ; he even fetched me water from the Spring of Eternal Youth and Beauty ; thus I shall never grow old, but shall be always beautiful."

Among those who heard the Queen speak thus were some who were very envious of Avenant. They took the first opportunity to say to the King :

"Your Majesty is not at all jealous, though you have such good reason to be so. Her Majesty the Queen is so fond of Avenant that she can neither eat nor drink. She does nothing but talk of the obligations you are under to him, as if no one else whom you could have sent could have succeeded in bringing her."

The King replied :

"Now you mention it, I can see it for myself. Go and put him in irons, and shut him up in the tower."

They took Avenant, and as a reward for serving his King so loyally he was again flung in chains into the tower. He was allowed to see no one but his gaoler, who threw him his piece of black bread through a slit in the wall and gave him water in an earthenware bowl. However, Frisky remained faithful to him, consoled him as well as he could, and brought him all the news.

When Goldenlocks heard how Avenant had been treated she threw herself weeping at the feet of the King, and besought him to take the youth out of prison, but the more she

begged, the more angry he became, saying to himself:

"It must be that she loves him."

At last, seeing that she could not move the King, Goldenlocks ceased mentioning Avenant's name, but she became very sad.

The King began to fear that perhaps the Queen did not think him sufficiently good-looking, and he resolved to bathe his face with some of the wonderful water Goldenlocks had brought with her, so that she might like him better.

Now, in order that she should always have it at hand, the Queen kept the precious phial in her sleeping-chamber on the mantelpiece. That morning a careless maid, trying to kill a spider with her broom, knocked over the phial, and the priceless liquid was scattered over the floor. The maid quickly gathered up the fragments of glass and removed all traces of the mishap; then, recalling that she had noticed a similar phial in the King's dressing-room, she fetched this and placed it where the broken phial had stood.

Unfortunately the King's phial contained a poisonous mixture, very deadly in its action. If rubbed on the skin it would induce a deep sleep from which the victim would never awake.

When, therefore, his Majesty carried out his purpose, having secured what he thought was the magic elixir, he immediately fell into a deep sleep, and ere long his horrified gentlemen discovered that he was dead.

Frisky was quick to carry the news to Avenant, who bade him find his way to the Queen, and beg her to remember the poor prisoner.

Frisky, being small, slipped easily through the crowd which gathered round the Queen—for there was great parade of mourning at Court.

When the little dog reached her Majesty, he touched her gently with his paw to draw her attention. She looked down into a pair of beseeching eyes raised to hers, and heard a soft voice saying :

" Madam, do not forget poor Avenant.

Avenant's great fidelity, and all he had suffered on her account, flashed to the mind of the Queen.

Without saying a word to those about her she left the palace forthwith and went straight to the tower, where she ordered the warden to open the heavily barred door. She herself went to the dungeon and took the chains from the hands and feet of the prisoner, after which she led Avenant to the palace, seated him on the throne, placed the crown of gold on his head, and hung the royal mantle over his shoulders.

Then, in presence of the whole Court, she said :

" Avenant, I myself crown you King, and take you for my husband."

At these gracious and condescending words, Avenant knelt at the Queen's feet, raised her hand to his lips, and thanked her.

The mourning at Court was now changed to great rejoicing, everyone being delighted that Avenant was King.

The wedding ceremonies were very splendid.

No one had ever seen such a lovely bride and such a handsome bridegroom.

Queen Goldenlocks and the brave King Avenant lived together happily to a good old age, both retaining their handsome appearance, despite the loss of the wonderful water.